ALEXANDER OF APHRODISIAS
IN THE MIDDLE AGES AND THE RENAISSANCE

STUDIA ARTISTARUM

ÉTUDES SUR LA FACULTÉ DES ARTS DANS LES UNIVERSITÉS MÉDIÉVALES

45

Directeurs honoraires
Louis Holtz
Olga Weijers

Sous la direction de
Luca Bianchi (Università degli Studi di Milano)
Dominique Poirel (Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes)

Secrétaire de rédaction
Emmanuelle Kuhry (Paris)

Comité de rédaction
Henk Braakhuis (Nijmegen)
Charles Burnett (London)
Dragos Calma (Dublin)
Anne Grondeux (Paris)
Jean-Pierre Rothschild (Paris)
Cecilia Trifogli (Oxford)

Alexander of Aphrodisias in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance

Edited by
PIETRO B. ROSSI,
MATTEO DI GIOVANNI,
AND ANDREA A. ROBIGLIO

BREPOLS

© 2021, Brepols Publishers n.v., Turnhout, Belgium.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher.

D/2021/0095/141
ISBN 978-2-503-58827-8
eISBN 978-2-503-58828-5
DOI 10.1484/M.SA-EB.5.119428
ISSN 2032-1252
eISSN 2294-8376

Printed in the EU on acid-free paper.

PIAE MEMORIAE
PAULI ACCATTINO
(1950 – 2015)
DICATUM

Contents

Foreword 9
Pietro B. Rossi – Matteo Di Giovanni – Andrea A. Robiglio

Paolo Accattino lettore della *Politica* di Aristotele
Lucio Bertelli 11

Paolo Accattino interprete del *De intellectu* di Alessandro di Afrodisia
Pier Luigi Donini 23

"The Excellent among the Earlier Scholars". Alexander of Aphrodisias in Avicenna's Metaphysics
Amos Bertolacci 33

New Wine in Old Vessels. Alexander of Aphrodisias as a Source for Averroes' Metaphysics
Matteo Di Giovanni 59

L'Alexandrisme comme rationalité philosophique
Joël Biard 77

"Alexander of Aphrodisias" in the Medieval Latin Tradition of the *Posterior Analytics*. Some Remarks
Amos Corbini 95

Alberto il Grande e il commento ai *Meteorologica* di Alessandro di Afrodisia
Elisa Rubino 109

(Pseudo-)Alexander of Aphrodisias between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Notes on the Afterlife of the *Medical Puzzles and Natural Problems*
Luigi Silvano 117

Topics and Syllogistic. Agostino Nifo Reading Alexander of Aphrodisias
Barbara Bartocci 145

Presence/Absence of Alexander of Aphrodisias in Renaissance Cosmo-Psychology
Pietro Daniel Omodeo 173

Hugo Grotius' Translation of Alexander of Aphrodisias' *De fato* in His *Philosophorum sententiae de Fato* (1648)
Francesca Iurlaro 193

Abstracts 211

Indices 215

Foreword

The present volume brings together most of the papers presented at the international conference "Alessandro di Afrodisia nel Medioevo e nel Rinascimento" that was held at the University of Turin, Palazzo del Rettorato, on October 27-28, 2017. The conference was organized within the ambit of the Italian "Project of Prominent National Interest" (Progetto di Rilevante Interesse Nazionale, PRIN) 2012, titled "Universality and Its Limits." It was dedicated to the memory of the late lamented colleague and friend Paolo Accattino, Professor of Ancient Philosophy at the University of Eastern Piedmont (Vercelli) and member of the PRIN research unit that was housed in the Department of Philosophy and Education of Turin University. Paolo Accattino passed away prematurely in 2015 leaving behind a scholarly legacy focusing, among other subjects, on the thought of Alexander of Aphrodisias. For this reason, we deemed it fitting to pay him tribute by ideally continuing his inquiry into Alexander and, in fact, by prolonging it into Alexander's afterlife and the transformations that some of his doctrines went through as a result of philosophical elaborations produced first in the Islamic world and subsequently in the Latin West. In fact, this line of inquiry turned out to fit in quite aptly with the project that was being conducted by our own research team. It was, therefore, very natural for us to work towards providing an opportunity for exchange and discussion among scholars who study the cultures and philosophies of those civilizations which flourished on the shores of the Mediterranean.

More specifically, we invited Lucio Bertelli and Pierluigi Donini to discuss the two central areas of Paolo's scholarship, that is, on one side Aristotle's political philosophy, and on the other side Alexander's theory of the soul and the intellect. We are particularly grateful for their response as they both held a true *conversatio* with Paolo, and for no few years. We did not deem it necessary to dwell upon Alexander's legacy in the late ancient tradition, still less to forefront his psychology. Instead, we endeavored to outline a sort of *status quaestionis* regarding any kind of influence, whether direct or indirect, that was exerted by doctrines going back to the Greek Commentator upon the science and philosophy of Latin Europe, medieval and Renaissance alike. No such endeavor can aspire to exhaustiveness, of course, and we are keenly aware that many fields of inquiry had to be left out. Certainly, more schoolmen from both the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance would lay claim to inclusion, not to mention humanistic translations of Greek commentators. This notwithstanding, it is our hope that the fruit of long days of labor in Turin — at least that fruit which it has been possible to collect and pass on in written form — may be of use as an incentive and a starting point for anyone who will continue the research.

In the end, we would like to express our warm thanks to the Department of Philosophy and Education of the University of Turin, as well as to Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, for contributing to the organization and success of the conference. The S.I.S.P.M. (Società Italiana per lo Studio del Pensiero Medievale) kindly granted its patronage to the event. Special thanks go to our colleague Dr. Vera Tripodi (University of Turin) for her generous work as Administrative Assistant. Our profound gratitude is finally owed to Luca Bianchi and Dominique Poirel, editors of the series *Studia Artistarum*, for gracing the volume with so distinguished a home.

Pietro B. Rossi,
Matteo Di Giovanni,
Andrea A. Robiglio

LUCIO BERTELLI

Paolo Accattino lettore della *Politica* di Aristotele

Chi consideri il panorama degli studi italiani sulla *Politica* di Aristotele negli ultimi 50 anni, non ricava un'impressione molto confortante: fino al 1997 nella sua *Guida ad Aristotele*[1] per la sezione *Politica* Enrico Berti poteva segnalare, oltre alle due benemerite traduzioni di Viano[2] (1955) e di Laurenti[3] (1966), soltanto sei studi italiani[4]. La scelta di Accattino di occuparsi dell'educazione nella *Politica* di Aristotele come argomento della sua tesi di laurea alla metà degli anni'70 non era certo influenzata da una moda del momento[5]. Scorrendo l'elenco delle sue pubblicazioni appare evidente la preferenza per tre autori: l'Aristotele della *Politica*, Alessandro di Afrodisia e Galeno, anche se non mancano incursioni rilevanti nel campo platonico (sul *Politico* di Platone)[6]. Ma oserei dire che il suo interesse per l'Aristotele politico è una costante nella sua ricerca dall'inizio fino a poco prima della sua prematura scomparsa: ancora nel febbraio 2015 era impegnato nella traduzione del VII libro della *Politica*.

1 E. Berti (ed.), *Guida ad Aristotele*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1997.

2 Aristotele. *Politica e Costituzione degli Ateniesi*, ed. C. A. Viano, Torino, UTET, 1955.

3 Aristotele. *La Politica*, ed. R. Laurenti, Roma-Bari, Laterza,1966; poi Aristotele. *Politica. Costituzione degli Ateniesi*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1972.

4 Ossia R. Laurenti, *Genesi e formazione della 'Politica' di Aristotele*, Padova, Cedam, 1965; L. Bertelli, *Historia e methodos. Analisi critica e topica politica nel secondo libro della 'Politica' di Aristotele*, Torino, Paravia, 1977; F. Calabi, *La città dell''oikos'. La 'politia' di Aristotele*, Lucca, Pacini Fazzi, 1984; P. Accattino, *L'anatomia della città nella 'Politica' di Aristotele*, Torino, Tirrenia, 1986; R. Laurenti, *Introduzione alla Politica di Aristotele*, Napoli, IISF, 1992; E. Berti, *Il pensiero politico di Aristotele*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1997.

5 Bisogna risalire al 1919 per trovare uno studio sull'argomento: M. Dufourny, *Aristote et l'éducation (Annales de l'Institut supérieur de philosophie*, 5), Louvain, Institut supérieur de philosophie, 1919; e il libro di Lord sull'educazione in Aristotele è del 1982: C. Lord, *Education and Culture in the Politcal Thought of Aristotle*, Ithaca (NY), Cornell University Press, 1982.

6 Nel 1992 Accattino presentava al convegno internazionale di Bristol sul *Politico* di Platone una relazione che trattava dell'argomento centrale del dialogo, il concetto di *arché*, pubblicata poi negli atti del convegno: 'L'arché del *Politico*', in C. J. Rowe (ed.), *Reading the 'Statesman'*, Sankt Augustin, Academie Verlag, 1995, p. 203-212; questo studio verrà poi utilizzato nella traduzione commentata del dialogo curata da Accattino: Platone, *Politico*, ed. P. Accattino, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1997.

Lucio Bertelli • Università degli Studi di Torino, luciobertelli@alice.it

Alexander of Aphrodisias in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, ed. by Pietro B. Rossi, Matteo Di Giovanni, and Andrea A. Robiglio, Turnhout, 2021 (*Studia Artistarum*, 45), p. 11-21
© BREPOLS PUBLISHERS
10.1484/M.SA-EB.5.120533

Nel confronto con la *Politica* Accattino non aderisce né ad una stretta osservanza del metodo storico-genetico che ha portato a «soluzioni divergenti»[7] né , tanto meno, alla fiducia che il pensiero politico aristotelico risponda ad una «struttura omogenea» ricavata a prezzo «di ricucitura dei frammenti di dottrina», convinto invece che «al di là di una generica omogeneità nel campo dei problemi trattati, la *Politica* non risponde a un piano unitario» e che, al contrario, «Aristotele sia tornato più volte sugli stessi temi in contesti problematici diversi»[8], adattando di volta in volta strumenti analitici e forme di argomentazione alle diverse prospettive.

D'altra parte, sempre in tema di mode, Accattino non è per nulla attratto dal tipo di interpretazione dell'opera aristotelica diventata comune nella cosiddetta «riabilitazione della filosofia pratica»: in una recensione alla traduzione italiana dell'opera[9] che in Italia per un certo periodo è passata come il «manifesto» di questo genere di ermeneutica, *Die Grundlegung der politischen Philosophie bei Aristoteles* (Freiburg-München, Alber, 1973[10]), Accattino mostrava come l'interpretazione filosofica che «non mira ai contenuti del pensiero aristotelico ma alle sue forze motrici, conformemente allo specifico procedimento di un'ermeneutica della *intentio obliqua*»[11], produceva gravi errori nella comprensione del testo della *Politica* e soprattutto finiva per attribuire ad Aristotele teorie da lui mai sostenute, come per esempio che il tipo di costituzione definita *politeia* (vd. *Politica* III 7) fosse «la costituzione per antonomasia, ossia la costituzione per eccellenza, insomma la migliore costituzione, il modello rispetto al quale misurare le altre costituzioni»[12].

Da questi presupposti sulla struttura della *Politica*, Accattino nella sua lettura del trattato sceglie tre linee interpretative dominanti: 1) l'individuazione dei metodi analitici impiegati nella soluzione dei problemi inerenti agli oggetti della politica con un'attenzione particolare alle tecniche dialettiche e alla mutuazione di modelli ermeneutici ricavati da altre opere del *corpus*; 2) il confronto costante con le dottrine platoniche, esplicitamente o implicitamente chiamate in causa, al fine di evidenziare le soluzioni nuove offerte da Aristotele su temi comuni; 3) la questione rilevante — anzi essenziale per una corretto intendimento di ciò che Aristotele si propone nell'analizzare le varie forme costituzionali della *polis* — di quale sia la natura della *ariste politeia*, della costituzione migliore in assoluto.

---

7 Accattino, *L'anatomia*, p. vii.

8 *Ibid.*

9 P. Accattino, 'Recensione a: G. Bien, *La filosofia politica di Aristotele* [ed. M. L. Violante, Bologna, il Mulino, 1985]', in *Quaderni di Storia*, 25 (1987), p. 161-168.

10 Tradotta in italiano col titolo 'La filosofia politica di Aristotele'; si veda la nota precedente (n. 9).

11 Bien, *La filosofia politica*, p. 44.

12 Accattino, 'Recensione', p. 165, con riferimento alla parte V dell'opera di Bien; cf. Bien, *La filosofia politica*, p. 303 ss.; tra gli errori macroscopici dell'"ermeneutica della *intentio obliqua*" adottata da Bien troviamo anche l'affermazione (*La filosofia politica*, p. 315) che 'Aristotele non ha dedicato nessun capitolo particolare alla *politia* nell'ambito della ricerca sulla *metabolé* nel libro V', affermazione che sembra ignorare che i cc. 6-7 del V libro della *Politica* sono dedicati proprio ai casi di *metabolé* nelle aristocrazie e nelle *politie*.

La svolta «empirica» dei libri centrali della *Politica* secondo la ben nota interpretazione di Werner Jaeger[13] trovava giustificazione nell'abbandono da parte di Aristotele dello «schematismo della divisione logica»[14] di ispirazione platonica dei libri più antichi (per Jaeger II, III, VII-VIII), sostituito dal «senso biologico della forma»[15] di cui è testimonianza l'analogia tra morfologia degli animali e «teorie dello stato» di *Polit.* IV 4. Jaeger non estende esplicitamente questa svolta metodologica anche a *Polit.* I dove tuttavia ammette l'intenzione di Aristotele di «erigere l'edificio dello stato sulla sua base naturale»[16]. L'uso di linguaggio e concetti derivati dalla fisica e dalla biologia nella *Politica* — in particolare nel libro I — era già stato osservato e sottolineato nell'Ottocento da Rudolf Eucken e da William Lambert Newman[17], ma è la versione jaegeriana della «svolta» metodologica che si diffonde nel Novecento fino ad anni recenti. Ed è a questo problema che Accattino dedica il suo primo lavoro a stampa nel 1978[18]: egli avvertiva che, anche se il rapporto biologia-politica è stato spesso chiamato in causa nella letteratura sulla *Politica*, mancava una «indagine comparativa»[19] esaustiva di questo tema, inoltre le affermazioni positive o negative su di esso, «riposano spesso su impressioni, estensioni indebite o pregiudiziali che non trovano riscontro nei testi»[20]. Stimolato senza dubbio dall'uscita ancora recente del libro di Günther Bien, in cui si negava qualsiasi valore esplicativo alle analogie biologiche sia in *Polit.* I, 2 sia in *Polit.* IV 4 e in genere nei libri centrali, Accattino riapriva la questione concentrando l'attenzione sui due testi a cui principalmente si ricorreva per provare l'influenza del metodo della filosofia della natura sulla *Politica*, *Polit.* I 2 e IV 4. In un confronto puntuale tra *Fisica* II 1-2 e 8-9 e *Parti degli animali* I 1, dove «Aristotele istituisce uno stretto parallelo tra *physis* e *techne*, che mette capo a un concetto di natura, intesa come ordine naturale»[21], e l'uso del concetto di natura come forma e fine nella spiegazione della *polis* in *Polit.* I 2, permette ad Accattino di stabilire una affinità nel metodo di indagine tra *Politica* e opere biologiche, e nello stesso tempo di rettificare la definizione jaegeriana di «metodo genetico»: quella che Aristotele mette un atto in *Polit.* I 2 non è la decrizione della genesi della *polis* attraverso la progressiva aggregazione dei suoi presupposti materiali; «a ogni livello del processo il punto di vista del dato materiale è continuamente integrato col punto di vista del fine e della funzione. Si tratta cioè di un metodo che è genetico per l'ordine progressivo in cui presenta la successione, ma che è nello stesso tempo analisi

13 Si veda W. Jaeger, *Aristoteles.Grundlegung einer Geschichte seiner Entwicklung*, Berlin, Weidmann, 1923 (trad. italiana di Guido Calogero, W. Jaeger, *Aristotele. Prime linee di una storia della sua evoluzione spirituale*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1935, da cui cito).

14 Jaeger, *Aristotele*, p. 364.

15 *Ibid.*

16 *Ibid.*, p. 365.

17 R. Eucken, *Die Methode der aristotelischen Forschung*, Berlin, Weidmann, 1872; W. L. Newman (ed.), *The Politics of Aristotle*, voll. 1-4, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1887-1902.

18 P. Accattino, 'Il problema del metodo biologico nella *Politica* di Aristotele', *Atti dell'Accademia delle Scienze di Torino*, Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche e Filologiche, 112 (1978), p. 169-195.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 173.

20 *Ibid.*

21 *Ibid.*, p. 174.

condizionale: i *pragmata phyomena* non sono semplicemente le «cose che crescono» ma anche «le cose che assumono via via la loro conformazione naturale»[22], cioè la loro funzione in vista del fine ultimo.

In questa prospettiva Aristotele analizza le forme di *koinoniai* inferiori alla *polis* — *oikos* con le relazioni tra padrone e schiavo, marito e moglie, padre e figli, villaggio — per individuare in ciascuna di esse la funzione in vista del *telos* — autarchia e «vivere bene» (*eu zen*) — che si realizzano pienamente solo a livello della *polis*. È facile confondere la descrizione di questo processo con un processo di formazione o genetico: in realtà si tratta di «un'analisi delle componenti strutturali» della *polis*; per essere un processo di formazione sarebbe necessario indicare una causa efficiente, che non viene mai menzionata nei passaggi dalla casa al villaggio alla città. La città in definitiva gode di uno statuto ibrido a metà tra un prodotto della *techne* e della *physis* ed è «naturale soltanto dal punto di vista del *telos*»[23].

Se l'analogia con il metodo delle indagini biologiche si dimostra funzionante per l'analisi strutturale della città e delle sue componenti, il ricorso al modello della classificazione degli animali per spiegare la pluralità delle forme costituzionali invocato da Aristotele in *Polit.* IV 4, sul quale si fondava l'enunciazione della svolta metodologica di Jaeger e successori, si rivela al contrario poco efficace. Come premessa alla discussione di questo capitolo, Accattino mette in guardia dal considerare il passo in questione isolato dal resto dell'indagine sul perché esistano molte forme di costituzione: infatti in *Polit.* IV 3 Aristotele fornisce una spiegazione della pluralità delle costituzioni fondata sul metodo della divisione delle parti socio-economiche di cui consiste una città, poveri, ricchi, cittadini «medi», e all'interno di queste categorie, le differenze di funzioni e di status. Dato «lo stretto legame tra struttura sociale della città e il suo ordinamento politico»[24], le costituzioni risultanti dipenderanno dai rapporti di forza tra le diverse parti della città. Nel capitolo successivo, che a giudizio di Accattino e della maggioranza degli interpreti è una «seconda redazione» o un doppione del precedente, Aristotele riprende la questione della pluralità delle costituzioni in base alla pluralità di «parti» (*mere*) della città, al fine di distinguere sulla scorta dell'analogia biologica le funzioni di ciascuna di esse e di stabilire la differenza delle varie costituzioni sulla base della combinazione degli organi/funzioni necessari alla città. Se la prima parte del programma — risalire dalle funzioni agli organi/parti della città — è coerente con i principi esposti in *Parti degli animali* I 1, ed è efficace per illustrare le componenti funzionali della città e per offrire «una morfologia della società»[25], la seconda parte — classificazione delle costituzioni in base alla combinazione di organi/funzioni — si rivela inefficace per la fallacia dell'analogia tra organi e parti della città in quanto non si può applicare la regola della «divisione del lavoro organico» propria dell'essere vivente — ad ogni organo la sua specifica funzione — dato che nella città i diversi gruppi funzionali possono rivestire

22 *Ibid.*, p. 178.
23 *Ibid.*, p. 185.
24 *Ibid.*, p. 189.
25 *Ibid.*, p. 193.

più funzioni: uno stesso soggetto può essere allo stesso tempo soldato, contadino, giudice. E difatti Aristotele in conclusione della sua analogia biologica deve tornare al criterio di classificazione adottato in *Polit.* IV 3: le parti della città si distinguono in base allo status economico in ricchi e poveri e queste sono «soprattutto» le parti della città. D'altra parte il metodo della combinazione delle funzioni — come giustamente avverte Accattino richiamandosi a un fondamentale studio di Geoffrey Ernest Richard Lloyd[26] — non corrisponde a nessuno dei modelli di classificazione proposti nelle opere biologiche, per cui — conclude Accattino — «l'analogia metodologica tra classificazione degli animali e classificazione delle costituzioni resta soltanto un'analogia generale che non viene messa a profitto»[27]: pertanto il giudizio di Jaeger (e successori) sulla mutazione di metodo nella classificazione delle costituzioni di *Polit.* IV va corretto nel senso che l'analogia biologica poteva servire solo a descrivere la morfologia della città, non a rendere conto delle differenze delle varie costituzioni, dove entrano in gioco altri fattori e altra metodologia.

Questo primo studio aristotelico di Accattino è particolarmente importante perché in esso — specialmente nella discussione di *Polit.* IV 4 — si evidenzia *in nuce* il tema delle «parti della città» che diventa il filo conduttore della sua opera di maggior impegno, prima del commento al III libro della *Politica*, opera che si intitola non a caso *L'anatomia della città nella Politica di Aristotele* (Torino, Tirrenia Stampatori, 1986). Il tema non aveva ricevuto un'attenzione particolare fino ad allora, anche se, come ricorda Accattino nella premessa, la lacuna era stata colmata nel 1980 dal libro di Eckart Schütrumpf (*Die Analyse der Polis durch Aristoteles*, Amsterdam, B.R. Grüner, 1980), libro di cui Paolo era venuto a conoscenza a ricerca avanzata e che comunque teneva ben presente nella sua opera. Secondo Accattino la questione delle «parti della città» che percorre tutto il tessuto della *Politica* dal I al VII libro, costituiva «un parametro sufficientemente attendibile sul quale misurare gli spostamenti di interesse nelle riflessioni di Aristotele» e permetteva anche di «ravvisare, con tutte le cautele del caso, fasi successive della sua riflessione intorno ai problemi politici»[28]. L'opera è divisa in tre brevi, ma densi, capitoli riguardanti il primo la struttura della «comunità politica ottima» — in particolare i capp. 8-9 del VII libro dove è presentata la classificazione delle «parti» dell'*ariste politeia* — confrontata con il genere di comunità che risulta da *Polit.* I; il secondo si concentra sul problema della partecipazione dei cittadini alla comunità politica e i titoli di accesso al potere, in altri termini su *Polit.* III; il terzo analizza le componenti della città e la loro relazione con i diversi regimi, quelli reali e quelli possibili. L'analisi della struttura della città ottima date le premesse — cioè una città orientata alla vita secondo virtù — si propone di classificare le diverse parti in base al criterio della virtù, per cui le funzioni rivolte alla semplice sussistenza della città (contadini, artigiani) saranno escluse dal godimento dei diritti politici e si troveranno o nella posizione di schiavi (i contadini) o di liberi,

---

26 G. E. R. Lloyd, 'The Development of Aristotle's Theory of the Classification of Animals', in *Phronesis*, 6 (1961), p. 59-81.

27 Accattino, *Il problema del metodo biologico*, p. 193.

28 P. Accattino, *L'anatomia della città nella Politica di Aristotele*, Torino, Tirrenia Stampatori, 1986, p. viii.

ma non cittadini (artigiani e commercianti). Solo ai cittadini a pieno titolo — cioè quelli che possono vivere una vita secondo virtù — competeranno le funzioni proprie di una città orientate al vivere bene: difesa, amministrazione della città, funzioni giudiziarie, culto. La comunità risulta essere quindi una *koinonia ton homoion* — una comunità di eguali — nel segno della virtù. La soluzione per la gestione del potere politico deve fare i conti con la specializzazione delle funzioni: infatti non tutti, anche se eguali, possono partecipare contemporaneamente alla gestione della città, né d'altra parte le diverse funzioni possono essere assegnate permanentemente a soggetti diversi, che sarebbe la soluzione platonica, rifiutata da Aristotele: egli propone quindi una rotazione al potere fondata sulla differenza di età e di prestazioni dei cittadini dell'ottimo stato, i giovani dotati di *dynamis* si dedicheranno alla funzione militare in attesa di sviluppare nella maturità la virtù della *phronesis* necessaria per governare. In questo modo sarà rispettata sia l'eguaglianza, in quanto tutti a turno avranno accesso al potere, sia l'omogeneità (*homoiotes*) del corpo civico.

Questo tipo di comunità è confrontata con quella risultante dall'analisi delle parti in *Polit.* I, dove i *mere* del composto «città» non sono più i singoli individui, unificati o differenziati dal criterio della virtù, ma le «varie *koinoniai* che formano la città e di conseguenza gli individui che entrano a vario titolo in qualcuna delle comunità»[29]. Qui non si tratta più di distinguere tra cittadini e non-cittadini, ma di distinguere le diverse componenti della città in rapporto alle loro specifiche funzioni all'interno di ogni *koinonia*. La tesi che Aristotele si propone di confutare è quella platonica dell'identità dell'*arché* — dell'autorità — a tutti i livelli di comunità e deve quindi dimostrare che i rapporti di autorità in seno alle diverse componenti sono differenziati, anche se complementari: il rapporto gerarchico assimilato al rapporto tra anima e corpo vale solo all'interno della *koinonia* primaria dell'*oikos*, mentre l'*arché politiké* — l'autorità nel campo politico — riguarda soggetti eguali e prevede lo scambio — cosa impossibile nei rapporti dell'*oikos* — di ruoli tra governato e governante. Ma a differenza della «comunità di eguali (*homoioi*)» di *Polit.* VII Aristotele in *Polit.* I riconosce alle funzioni subordinate (donna, schiavo) quel minimo di virtù «sufficiente a svolgere la loro funzione», per cui le *koinoniai* che formano la città sono organizzate in «diseguaglianze complementari»[30] che permettono l'esistenza della comunità politica. La *polis* di *Polit.* I si presenta quindi come una città di «liberi ed eguali», ma come *isoi*: criticando in *Polit.* II la tesi dell'unità della città secondo il Platone della *Repubblica,* Aristotele può aggiungere un'altra qualificazione della comunità politica: essa non è formata da elementi omogenei/*homoioi*, ma da elementi «differenti per specie» (*ex eidei diapherontes*) e la differenza si fonda sulla regola della reciprocità (*antipeponthos*): in quanto *isoi* e liberi i cittadini si scambiano i ruoli di governato e governante, violando palesemente la regola platonica dell'unicità della funzione.

Ripercorrere l'intricato percorso delle argomentazioni del libro III della *Politica* trovando un tessuto coerente nella sequenza di *aporiai* su cui è costruita la dimostrazione

29 *Ibid.*, p. 17.
30 *Ibid.*, p. 19.

non è un'impresa facile, tant'è che molti interpreti anche autorevoli si sono limitati ad un'esposizione parafrastica dei temi trattati e spesso sono caduti nella trappola di considerare affermazioni aristoteliche quelle che in realtà sono opinioni introdotte in vista della loro demolizione. Il merito innegabile di Accattino è quello di aver ricostruito pazientemente il filo logico delle argomentazioni dialettiche, cercando di sciogliere le apparenti contraddizioni. Come è noto, la ricerca del III libro esordisce come ricerca sulle forme di costituzioni, ma la costituzione è l'organizzazione (*taxis*) degli abitanti di una città, e dato che la città è un composto di molte parti, innanzi tutto va esaminata e definita la parte minima del composto, il cittadino. Qualcuno ha pensato che questa nuova divisione della città in parti, dopo quella di *Polit.* I, o fosse superflua o ignorasse l'esistenza della precedente[31]. Nell'interpretazione di Accattino c'è uno stretto legame tra la definizione del cittadino come «colui che ha la possibilità (*exousia*: e Accattino insiste sul valore di questo termine) di avere parte ad una carica deliberativa o giudiziaria» secondo la costituzione vigente, e la *politeia* che costituisce l'elemento identitario della città, in quanto «comunità di cittadini che hanno in comune una costituzione». Definito il cittadino in termini di partecipazione possibile alle funzioni politiche, si tratta poi di esaminare i suoi titoli di accesso a queste: a livello minimo si tratta di svolgere nel modo migliore le competenze specifiche, in generale di contribuire alla conservazione della costituzione. Quindi la virtù del cittadino sarà una variabile dipendente dalla costituzione: a questo punto Aristotele impone un salto di qualità alla discussione, che, come sottolinea Accattino, è condotta secondo i canoni dialettici esposti nei *Topici*, cioè pone il problema del confronto tra la virtù del cittadino, variabile in relazione alle funzioni e allo status — cioè quello di governato o di governante — e la virtù unica dell'*aner agathos* al livello di eccellenza, cioè rispetto all'*ariste politeia*. In sette mosse, ben ricostruite da Accattino nei loro snodi dialettici, Aristotele può concludere che solo in un caso c'è coincidenza tra i due livelli di virtù, quando cioè il cittadino, la cui capacità e competenza consistono nel saper essere governato e nel governare, assume il ruolo di governante: in quel caso a lui competerà la virtù della *phronesis*, mentre nella posizione di governato avrà in dote solo l'«opinione vera» (*alethes doxa*: concessione a Platone). La funzione di questa complicata digressione nella prospettiva della *ariste politeia*, avverte Accattino, non è quella di indicare una particolare forma costituzionale a cui si adatterebbe la differenziazione dei ruoli tra cittadino e governante, come alcuni hanno pensato; Aristotele intende solo mettere in rilievo le condizioni di esercizio dell'*arché politiké* in una comunità di *eleutheroi* e *homoioi* per nascita: il problema dell'eguaglianza resta ancora da risolvere. Ed è questo il tema che occupa i capitoli successivi alla classificazione delle costituzioni (*Polit.* III 6-7), distinte secondo il criterio dell'interesse comune in tre forme corrette (monarchia, aristocrazia, *politia*, innovazione aristotelica) e tre forme degenerate (tirannide, oligarchia, democrazia). Il problema dell'eguaglianza è posto come confronto tra i titoli invocati dai concorrenti al potere nella città (virtù/nobiltà, ricchezza, libertà) in base ai criteri della giustizia distributiva esposti

31 Si veda, per esempio, ARISTOTELES. *Politik. Buch II-III*, ed. E. SCHÜTRUMPF, Berlino, Akademie Verlag, 1991, p. 383.

nell'*Etica Nicomachea*, esplicitamente richiamata, e in base alla finalità della *polis*, l'*eu zen*, a cui come condizioni necessarie concorrono ricchezza e libertà, ma che non si realizza senza la presenza della virtù. Accattino insiste giustamente su questo tema del confronto o comparabilità dei titoli diseguali, ma omogenei, perché con questo strumento può giustificare la presenza in *Polit.* III di due ipotesi di governo, a prima vista inconciliabili, ma perfettamente coerenti con quella logica. In *Polit.* III 11 Aristotele presenta una soluzione costituzionale che prevede l'accesso congiunto al potere di un *plethos* di liberi non troppo abbietti e dotati individualmente di una minima virtù, e degli *aristoi.* L'argomento che rende possibile questa combinazione è quello chiamato comunemente «della somma»: se sommate insieme, le parti di virtù e di saggezza possedute da ciascun libero — lo stesso argomento è esteso anche alla ricchezza — superano in quantità quelle degli *aristoi* che sono una minoranza; tuttavia questo sistema prevede che le cariche di maggior peso siano riservate a chi ha maggiore esperienza nel governo e ricchezza, cioè agli *aristoi*.

L'alternativa simmetrica e contraria è quella rappresentata dalla presenza nella città di un individuo o un gruppo ristretto di individui che possiedano una virtù eccezionale, incomparabile con quella di tutti gli altri cittadini: costui o costoro non possono essere considerati «parte» della città, perché la loro virtù supera la totalità delle virtù degli altri. Accattino giustamente, a differenza di altri, sottolinea il fatto che qui Aristotele non impiega il criterio della «somma», in quanto la virtù dell'individuo o del gruppo dotati di virtù eccezionale non è omogenea rispetto a quella degli altri. A un tale individuo o gruppo quindi non si può applicare la regola della rotazione al governo ed essi saranno anche superiori alla legge, in quanto essi stessi sono legge. Aristotele assimila infatti l'individuo dalla virtù eccezionale a un dio tra gli uomini, attribuendogli apparentamente le stesse prerogative dell'«uomo regale» del *Politico* di Platone: ma secondo Accattino questa apparente convergenza nasconde una «rottura polemica» con l'immagine platonica; infatti l'«uomo regale» di Platone è simile per natura ai suoi sudditi, mentre per Aristotele l'individuo o gli individui dalla virtù eccezionale, sottratti alla regola dell'alternanza e al vincolo della legge, non sono omogenei al resto della città. In uno studio successivo sulla polemica di Aristotele con Platone in *Polit.* III[32] Accattino pone la questione incisivamente in questi termini: «Platone insomma deve scegliere — pare dire Aristotele. Se il suo politico esercita il potere assoluto, allora non è il politico normale dell'età attuale, ma è come un dio. Se viceversa — come afferma esplicitamente Platone — egli non è un dio, allora deve spartire il potere»[33]. Il governo dei migliori si propone quindi di diritto come la forma perfetta di costituzione, ma essa, come si dice nel finale di *Polit.* III (cap. 18), può presentarsi con tre possibilità, o il governo di un solo o di un intero *genos* o di una pluralità (*plethos*) di individui di virtù superiore. Quest'ultima

32 P. Accattino, 'Un confronto di Aristotele col *Politico* di Platone nel III libro della *Politica*', relazione presentata al Congreso Internacional sobre la *Politica* de Aristóteles, Madrid 2008, poi pubblicata in F. L. Lisi, M. Curnis (eds), *The Harmony of Conflict: The Aristotelian Foundation of Politics*, Sankt Augustin, Academie Verlag, 2017, p. 65-76.

33 F. L. Lisi, M. Curnis (eds), *The Harmony of Conflict: The Aristotelian Foundation of Politics*, Sankt Augustin, Academie Verlag, 2017, p. 70.

soluzione, secondo Accattino, non esclude l'avvicendamento al governo all'interno del *plethos* dei migliori e sembrerebbe quindi molto simile al tipo di governo immaginato in *Polit.* VII; tuttavia c'è una sostanziale diversità tra il regime degli uomini migliori di *Polit.* III e quello di *Polit.* VII: qui gli esclusi dalle funzioni politiche sono in condizione o di schiavitù o comunque esclusi dalla partecipazione alla *politeia*, in *Polit.* III i sottoposti al governo dei migliori sono liberi e fanno parte della città in quanto godono dei vantaggi del buon governo dei migliori.

Nell'ultimo capitolo, concentrato sulla classificazione delle forme costituzionali di *Polit.* IV, lo strumento analitico delle parti della città — intesa ancora come composto — ritorna in primo piano come causa dell'esistenza della pluralità di costituzioni: ma, come Accattino aveva già dimostrato nell'articolo sul metodo biologico nella *Politica*, Aristotele rinuncia a una classificazione delle parti secondo questo modello per orientarsi verso una tipologia che si fonda sulle condizioni sociali ed economiche degli elementi della città. Rispetto alle conclusioni del suo primo studio Accattino aggiunge tuttavia un'osservazione importante: le parti funzionali secondo lo schema biologico, abbandonate nella classificazione delle costituzioni, ritornano distinte come parti di ogni *politeia* — cioè nella forma di parte deliberante (*to bouleuomenon*), di funzione giudiziaria (*to dikazon*) e di cariche esecutive (*archai*) — nei cc. 14-16 del libro IV e in *Polit.* VI 1 per fornire il quadro delle possibili combinazioni nei diversi regimi. Tuttavia nella classificazione delle forme di governo le parti della città entrano in gioco nel loro aspetto socio-economico e la forma di costituzione è data dal rapporto di forza tra fattori di qualità (libertà, ricchezza, cultura e nobiltà) e il fattore quantità (superiorità numerica). Se si tiene conto del calcolo delle forze nella valutazione dei regimi, le forme di costituzione risultanti saranno o di tipo oligarchico o di tipo democratico. «L'unica via d'uscita dalla alternativa democrazia/oligarchia»[34] è quella della costituzione dove sia presente una quantità sufficiente di cittadini medi (*mesoi*) — una delle tre parti della città indicate in *Polit.* IV 3 — che, dotati della virtù della *mesotes*, possono servire da elemento di mediazione tra le parti opposte. Tuttavia Aristotele ammette che la possibilità di realizzazione di una tale costituzione sono scarse per l'esiguità del numero dei *mesoi* nelle città e che quindi i regimi più diffusi restano oligarchia e democrazia: a questo punto Accattino avanza un'ipotesi per uscire dall'aporia in cui lo stesso Aristotele si è cacciato. Immagina cioè che egli pensasse alla possibilità di una *mese politeia* anche senza la presenza fisica dei *mesoi*[35]. Analizzando — è il caso di dire — con molta scaltrezza come viene presentata la formazione della *politia* in IV 8-9, Accattino osserva che, pur in presenza della stessa base sociale che dà luogo a una democrazia o a un'oligarchia — vale a dire libertà e ricchezza — il progetto della *politia*, di cui Accattino sottolinea il carattere di costruzione teorica, si può realizzare, ammesso il consenso di ricchi e poveri, con una combinazione di norme e istituzioni che possano soddisfare le pretese dei ricchi e dei poveri. In questo senso la *politia* non è solo una costituzione mista di elementi oligarchici e democratici, ma è anche una costituzione *media* nel senso che ricerca

34 *Ibid.*, p. 91.
35 *Ibid.*, p. 98.

le norme e le istituzioni che stanno a metà strada tra quelle democratiche e quelle oligarchiche. E secondo Accattino a questo modello, in assenza di una consistente quantità di *mesoi*, Aristotele pensava per superare l'alternativa democrazia/oligarchia e rendere più stabili i due regimi opposti trasformandoli in regimi più moderati. Anche se non si trattava delle costituzioni migliori in assoluto, sia la *mese politeia* sia la *politia* modellata su di essa rappresentavano la soluzione migliore per una «costituzione nelle condizioni date»[36].

Quando nel 2004 Mauro Moggi e lo scrivente progettarono un'edizione con traduzione e commento della *Politica*, corredata anche di un testo riveduto rispetto alla canonica edizione di William David Ross, io posi la condizione che all'impresa fosse associato Paolo Accattino come il più competente in Italia — a mio giudizio — sui problemi esegetici presentati dal trattato aristotelico. Oltre alla sua costante collaborazione con i redattori dell'opera fino al IV libro di cui curò l'Introduzione, a lui personalmente fu affidata la traduzione e il commento del libro III: nell'ovvia impossibilità di passare in rassegna l'intero commento, mi limiterò a segnalare i punti su cui Accattino ha concentrato la sua attenzione come risultano dalla sua introduzione. Dopo aver esposto le linee tematiche del libro, distinte in quattro grandi blocchi — cc. 1-5, 6-8, 9-13, 14-18 —, in una lucida esposizione che riesce a mettere chiarezza nell'intricato percorso, Accattino dedica tre dense pagine all'esposizione del metodo di Aristotele in questo libro, fatto di «problemi e di difficoltà da risolvere»[37]: il metodo è quello dialettico consueto e la tecnica della disputa dialettica dell'opposizione di opinioni a favore e contro una tesi viene comprovata dall'analisi dei capitoli dove il metodo è più appariscente (III 4, 10, 11, 13), con l'invito alla cautela «nel prendere come pezzi di dottrina aristotelica definitiva affermazioni che sono semplicemente argomentazioni provvisorie in vista dell'obiettivo finale»[38].

L'altro polo di interesse è il confronto polemico con Platone, dove Accattino mette a frutto i risultati di due suoi lavori precedenti, uno del 2000 dedicato al problema del «regime degli uomini migliori»[39], l' altro quello già citato del 2008, ma pubblicato postumo nel 2017, riguardante appunto la polemica con Platone nel III libro. Anche se Platone non è mai esplicitamente citato nel libro III, il dissenso col maestro secondo Accattino si rivela sia nella rappresentazione della regalità assoluta, sia soprattutto nella giustificazione al cap. 11 del regime del *plethos* moderatamente virtuoso unito a quello degli *aristoi*, dove Aristotele demolisce due principi fondamentali di Platone, quello del sapere specialistico affidato a pochi o a un solo competente, opponendogli la categoria della «competenza diffusa», e la distinzione tra uso puro e semplice e uso corretto affidato solo a chi è competente, per cui la tecnica politica risultava essere la suprema tecnica d'uso, sostituita da una competenza d'uso che poteva

36 *Ibid.*, p. 99.

37 P. Accattino, 'Introduzione' ad Aristotele. *La Politica. Libro III*, ed. P. Accattino, M. Curnis (direzione di L. Bertelli e M. Moggi), Roma, 'L'Erma' di Bretschneider, 2013, p. 11.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

39 P. Accattino, 'Il regime degli uomini perfettamente virtuosi: Aristocrazia e costituzione ottima nella *Politica* di Aristotele', in *Ethics & Politics/Etica & Politica*, 2 (2000); on line: https://www.openstarts.units.it/handle/10077/5559.

essere condivisa «da tutti coloro che sono profani della tecnica produttiva, purché facciano uso del prodotto»[40].

Accattino non poteva esimersi nell'introduzione dall'affrontare il problema della collocazione del III libro nel contesto della *Politica*. Le due prove addotte da Jaeger per il collegamento del III libro con la teoria dell'*ariste politeia* di VII-VIII — vale a dire la famosa conclusione dell'*Etica Nicomachea* dove si delinea il progetto della *Politica* e la ripetizione delle due ultime righe di *Polit.* III all'inizio di *Polit.* VII — vengono demolite dimostrando 1) che l'*ariste politeia* a cui si allude nel finale dell'*Etica Nicomachea* non corriponde a quella di VII-VIII, 2) che la ripetizione quasi testuale delle ultime parole di *Polit.* III all'inizio di *Polit.* VII sono solo «il tentativo maldestro di un interpolatore» al fine di stabilire un legame tra III e VII libro. Il III libro al contrario ha stretti legami con il IV, per cui si giunge alla conclusione che il III con ogni probablità è stato redatto dopo VII-VIII.

Anche da questa pur sommaria rassegna del lavoro di Accattino sulla *Politica* appare evidente la sua capacità interpretativa in particolar modo nell'evidenziare gli aspetti metodologici del trattato variabili in coerenza con le diverse problematiche affrontate: è motivo quindi di stupore che un autorevole interprete come Eckart Schütrumpf abbia lamentato in una recente recensione un'insufficiente spiegazione «sia della logica dell'argomento sia dei soggiacenti concetti»[41] nel commento di Accattino.

---

40 Accattino, 'Introduzione', p. 16.

41 E. Schütrumpf, 'Rezension von: P. Accattino, M. Curnis (eds), *Aristotele. La politica*, libro III [Roma, "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 2013]', in *Gnomon*, 88 (2016), p. 690.

PIER LUIGI DONINI

Paolo Accattino interprete del *De intellectu* di Alessandro di Afrodisia

Parlerò qui di un testo che è la conclusione che Paolo Accattino scrisse da solo per un lavoro che avevamo avviato insieme, il commento all'interpretazione che diede Alessandro di Afrodisia della teoria psicologica aristotelica. Insieme avevamo commentato il trattato *De anima* di Alessandro[1]; dopo di che io fui catturato da altri testi e problemi, piuttosto lontani dalla psicologia di Aristotele, e non partecipai all'impresa che Paolo prese su di sé, offrire un'edizione anche dello scritto di Alessandro sull'intelletto conservato nel secondo libro *De anima,* più noto come *Mantissa*. Dato il grande interesse che negli studi sull'Aristotelismo ha il problema dell'intelletto, l'idea di completare il lavoro iniziato con il *De anima* studiando anche il *De intellectu* e le sue possibili relazioni, di convergenza o di opposizione, rispetto al *De anima*, era certamente opportuna e Paolo la realizzò da solo, soltanto chiedendomi di leggere il suo testo e di discuterne — cosa che feci, senza esser capace di aggiungere nulla di significativo alle osservazioni e conclusioni di Paolo, con le quali posso quasi sempre concordare anche oggi.

Devo precisare che la traduzione del *De intellectu*[2] fu ripresa pochi anni dopo[3] da Paolo all'interno di un più ampio lavoro: la traduzione brevemente commentata di tutta la *Mantissa*. In questo nuovo libro il commento al *De intellectu* è però ridotto a proporzioni minime e non ci sono novità rilevanti rispetto all'edizione di cui parlerò oggi; ci sono leggere correzioni alla traduzione perché, nel suo rigoroso scrupolo, Paolo tenne conto di lavori comparsi in quei pochi anni di distanza tra le due sue pubblicazioni; ma non ci sono mutamenti del testo e dell'interpretazione tali da configurare in modo diverso la spiegazione complessiva del testo alessandrista.

Era, il lavoro del 2001, chiaro, accurato e pieno di acume, esibendo tutte le doti di erudizione, rigore e intelligenza critica, oltre che di estesa e approfondita conoscenza della letteratura secondaria, tutte quelle, insomma, che avevo imparato ad apprezzare

1 Alessandro di Afrodisia, *L'anima*, ed. P. Accattino, P. Donini, Bari-Roma, Laterza, 1996.
2 *Id.*, *De intellectu*, ed. P. Accattino, Torino, Thélème, 2001.
3 Si veda *Id.*, *De anima II (Mantissa)*, ed. P. Accattino, Alessandria, Edizioni dell'Orso, 2005.

Pier Luigi Donini • Università degli Studi di Milano, pierdonini@alice.it

Alexander of Aphrodisias in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, ed. by Pietro B. Rossi, Matteo Di Giovanni, and Andrea A. Robiglio, Turnhout, 2021 (*Studia Artistarum*, 45), p. 23-32
© BREPOLS PUBLISHERS
10.1484/M.SA-EB.5.120534

in Paolo nel comune lavoro sul *De anima*, in una collaborazione che anche oggi ricordo come esemplare e preziosa. Senza il suo aiuto non sarei mai giunto alla fine dell'opera (richiesi il suo soccorso nel lavoro di commento quando già avevo tradotto l'intero testo — lasciandolo poi a dormire per diversi anni in un cassetto, spaventato dalla difficoltà di interpretare un testo molto complicato che mi intimidiva). E anche oggi direi che il piccolo libro di Paolo sul *De intellectu* rimane la cosa migliore che esista negli studi su quello scritto e sulla sua relazione con il *De anima* di Alessandro.

La prima difficoltà da affrontarsi nell'interpretazione del *De intellectu* era certamente quella di scoprire una coerenza complessiva nello scritto trovando una logica nella successione delle sue parti e degli argomenti, peggio ancora, anzi: si trattava prima di tutto di distribuire correttamente le parti nel dialogo tra una pluralità di personaggi cui il testo fa pensare riferendone sì le opinioni, ma in modo tale da non rendere chiaro chi siano i responsabili o le fonti di ciò che si dice in ogni singola sezione del testo — insomma, non si capisce bene dove parli in propria persona Alessandro, dove qualcun altro e chi precisamente quest'altro sia. È un problema impossibile da illustrare senza trovarci in un'aula di seminario davanti ai testi greci, che sarebbero da discutere e interpretare parola per parola. Semplificando al massimo l'esposizione, dirò che il nodo centrale dei problemi sta in poche righe che si leggono verso la metà del testo (p. 110, 4-6 Bruns)[4], dopo le prime tre pagine che sembrerebbero contenere un'esposizione di una teoria molto affine a quella dei tre tipi di intelletto che Alessandro anche nel suo *De anima* attribuisce ad Aristotele (la distinzione dell'intelletto in intelletto materiale, intelletto come abito, intelletto in atto); dopo questa esposizione, che sembrerebbe di poter mettere a carico dell'autore stesso del *De intellectu*, di Alessandro, improvvisamente si leggono tre righe assolutamente misteriose, che nella traduzione del tutto fedele di Accattino suonano così:

> a proposito dell'intelletto che viene dall'esterno ho udito *da Aristotele* le cose di cui ho serbato memoria. I motivi che in realtà avevano indotto *Aristotele* a introdurre l'intelletto che viene dall'esterno si diceva che erano questi…

E di tali motivi segue il breve elenco. Faccio presente che l'intelletto che viene dall'esterno[5] è per Alessandro la forma superiore, il grado più alto dell'intelletto in atto, quel grado cioè che appartiene soltanto all'intelletto divino, non all'intelletto umano anche quando questo sia in atto: ed è detto «venire dall'esterno» perché, secondo Alessandro, viene a trovarsi momentaneamente nell'intelletto umano solo in quanto e quando questo riesca a pensare l'intelletto divino (che poi per Alessandro è quell'intelletto che funziona da dio motore immobile dell'universo secondo la teoria esposta nel libro Lambda della *Metafisica*). Ma ritorniamo sulle tre righe citate di Alessandro, che non possono non turbare profondamente.

---

4 Cf. Alexander Aphrodisiensis. *De intellectu*, in *Id.*, *Scripta minora*, ed. I. Bruns (CAG, Supplementum Aristotelicum, 2, 1), Berlin, Reimer, 1887, p. 106-113.

5 Nel greco di Aristotele e di Alessandro è il *nous thyrathen,* di cui Aristotele parla in un passo del *De generatione animalium*: II 3, 736b27-29.

Come può sostenere Alessandro di aver udito «da Aristotele» che i motivi che avevano indotto Aristotele a parlare dell'intelletto che viene dall'esterno erano i tali e talaltri? Alessandro è vissuto un buon mezzo millennio dopo Aristotele e da lui non può aver udito nulla: il testo sembra palesemente assurdo, a meno che implichi il riferimento a due differenti Aristotele. Da questa assurdità nel corso degli studi si è infatti usciti in tre modi diversi. In un primo tempo[6], si è pensato che nella prima ricorrenza del nome 'Aristotele' in linea 4 ci sia un errore dei copisti e che il nome originario fosse un altro, abbastanza simile a quello di Aristotele, tanto cioè da poter spiegare l'errore di trascrizione, e fosse invece il nome di Aristocle, da intendere cioè come un'allusione a un filosofo aristotelico altrimenti noto, Aristocle di Messene, che avrebbe allora dovuto essere uno dei maestri diretti di Alessandro. Ma l'ipotesi è molto debole, non solo per ragioni di cautela filologica elementare che direbbe di non alterare un testo senza poter addurre prove fortissime della non sostenibilità di ciò che è nei manoscritti, ma anche perché ciò che altrimenti sappiamo di Aristocle ne fa l'esponente di una forma di aristotelismo assolutamente diversa da quella di Alessandro e della tradizione di esegesi e commento in cui Alessandro appare a noi così bene inserito. Ben difficilmente, dunque, Aristocle avrebbe potuto essere un maestro di lui. Accantonando questa ipotesi, si poteva proporre di intendere le parole *ekousa para Aristotelous* («ho udito da Aristotele») in altro modo, cioè «ho udito da una tradizione che si richiamava ad Aristotele», e l'allusione andrebbe a qualche non identificabile filosofo che si sarebbe rifatto a un'interpretazione ormai tradizionale di Aristotele: ma è questa una forzatura del greco molto difficilmente difendibile. Finalmente, nel 1967 l'autorevolissimo Paul Moraux[7] si ricordò di un passo di Galeno, un contemporaneo forse appena un poco più vecchio di Alessandro, in cui era nominato un filosofo peripatetico di Mitilene a nome, anche lui, Aristotele, che avrebbe potuto benissimo essere un maestro di Alessandro e Moraux appunto propose di identificare in lui l'Aristotele nominato in *De intellectu* 110, 4. Dunque nel passo problematico Alessandro direbbe di aver ascoltato da Aristotele *di Mitilene* le ragioni che avrebbero indotto Aristotele, *lo Stagirita*, a introdurre il *nous thyrathen*. Questa proposta divenne ancor più plausibile quando nel 1985 comparvero due lavori, indipendenti l'uno dall'altro, uno dello stesso Moraux, l'altro proprio di Accattino[8], nei quali si faceva notare che un Aristotele, chiaramente diverso dal caposcuola peripatetico, era nominato come suo diretto maestro da Alessandro in un'altra sua opera, il commento alla *Metafisica* a p. 166, 19.

Dunque, una volta ammesso che in *De int.* 110, 4-6 si parla di due Aristotele molto lontani nel tempo e nella dimensione filosofica, lo sviluppo dell'argomento

---

6 Cf. E. Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung dargestellt*, III 1, Leipzig, Reisland, 1923 (5ª ed.), p. 814, n. 1.

7 P. Moraux, "Aristoteles, der Lehrer Alexanders von Aphrodisias", in *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 49 (1967), p. 169-182. Il testo di Galeno è in *Consuet.* 11, 4-12 M (Galenus. *De consuetudinibus,* ed. J. M. Schmutte, Leipzig-Berlin, Akademie-Verlag, 1941).

8 Cf. *Id.*, "Ein neues Zeugnis über Aristoteles, der Lehrer Alexanders von Aphrodisias", in *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 67 (1985), p. 266-289; P. Accattino, "Alessandro di Afrodisia e Aristotele di Mitilene", in *Elenchos*, 6 (1985), p. 67-74.

nello scritto di Alessandro incomincia a diventare più chiaro: Alessandro avrebbe riferito dopo 110,6 le spiegazioni del suo diretto insegnante Aristotele di Mitilene a proposito delle ragioni che avrebbero indotto l'altro Aristotele, lo Stagirita, a parlare dell'intelletto che viene dal di fuori, il *nous thyrathen*. Il resto dell'interpretazione, argomentata molto attendibilmente da Paolo, poteva venire di conseguenza: alla luce, però, di alcune considerazioni di carattere generale che funzionano da premesse e che Paolo soltanto, non altri, sviluppò nel suo libro e devo qui ricordare. Sulla base innanzitutto di considerazioni stilistiche, validissime, Paolo osservava nella sua *Introduzione* che in uno scritto che fosse stato destinato dall'autore a circolare tra un pubblico di dotti, di filosofi, ma anche semplicemente di persone colte interessate alla filosofia, nessuno si sarebbe permesso di scrivere in quel modo le linee 110, 4-6 senza chiarire immediatamente che si stava parlando di due Aristotele diversi; non era ragionevole o plausibile, insomma, e bisognava smettere di trattare il *De intellectu* di Alessandro come un testo analogo agli altri trattati filosofici che di lui ci sono giunti, il *De anima*, il *De fato*, il *De mixtione*, tutti chiaramente destinati a una circolazione pubblica (più o meno larga o ristretta è altra questione che qui non ha rilevanza). Alessandro poteva parlare in quel modo nelle linee di testo di cui discutiamo soltanto rivolgendosi a qualcuno che non potesse avere dubbi nell'identificazione e distinzione immediata dei due Aristotele, cioè, in sostanza, parlando a se stesso: il *De intellectu* doveva dunque essere trattato come uno scritto appartenente a un genere letterario assolutamente differente (per impostazione, modalità di scrittura e destinatari) da quello dei trattati filosofici, vale a dire come un documento scritto per la memoria personale o come uno stralcio del diario privato dell'autore, in cui erano ammissibili anche salti nella logica espositiva e nello stile che l'autore non si sarebbe invece mai permesso in un lavoro destinato a un qualsiasi pubblico. Questa è una proposta a mio giudizio estremamente innovativa, molto sensata e alla luce di questa eccellente ipotesi Paolo spiega poi tutto il contenuto del *De intellectu* successivo alle linee sopra incriminate. Devo però aggiungere che nel libro del 2005, in sede di commento, Paolo sottolineò il carattere ancora ipotetico di questa spiegazione, fondata sull'identificazione dell'Aristotele, di cui si parla a 110, 4, con l'Aristotele di Mitilene nominato nel commento alla *Metafisica* e da Galeno — e questa è la novità più considerevole che distingua le due edizioni, 2001 e 2005. Non penso, e non mi par di capire, che Paolo nel 2005 credesse di meno alla sua spiegazione precedente: voleva probabilmente dare un segno di assoluto rigore e di cautela a quell'ipotesi, conformemente a un suo abito critico che con gli anni forse era in lui diventato sempre maggiore.

In questa sede non posso dare della lettura complessiva di Paolo per il *De intellectu* altro che un resoconto molto sommario, che sarebbe questo. Da 110, 6 a 110,25 Alessandro espone le ragioni che secondo il suo diretto maestro Aristotele di Mitilene avrebbero indotto lo Stagirita a introdurre l'intelletto che viene dal di fuori, il *thyrathen nous*; ma a 110, 25 è chiaro che si apre un'altra prospettiva e si introduce una serie di considerazioni che spiegano quali sarebbero le principali conseguenze da ricavarsi dalle ragioni addotte dall'Aristotele di Mitilene. Il problema diventava però quello di capire a chi si dovessero attribuire quelle considerazioni: forse ancora all'Aristotele di Mitilene, o invece (secondo una proposta che ha goduto di una certa fortuna tra gli interpreti) a una tradizione diffusa tra gli aristotelici di cui al massimo

il filosofo di Mitilene sarebbe stato il portavoce? Né l'una, né l'altra cosa invece secondo Paolo Accattino, che mostra che le considerazioni di cui cerchiamo l'autore (e che vanno fino a 112, 5) concordano sostanzialmente con quanto Alessandro aveva esposto in propria persona nella parte iniziale dello scritto (quella che arriva fino all'introduzione dell'Aristotele di Mitilene a 110, 4). È dunque di nuovo Alessandro che tra 110,25 e 112,5 parla in propria persona e si dilunga in considerazioni sulla questione dell'intelletto.

Ma a 112, 5 incontriamo un'altra svolta improvvisa e del tutto inaspettata, perché Alessandro incomincia a parlare di qualcuno che «volendo poi mostrare che l'intelletto è immortale… sulla scorta di una riflessione tutta sua era solito dire cose del genere» — dunque qui non è più Alessandro a parlare. Chi mai, allora? Proporre il nome dell'Aristotele di Mitilene sembra ovvio: se non può essere Alessandro, è necessario che sia il solo altro personaggio di cui finora sono state esposte le idee distintamente da quelle di Alessandro, cioè il mitilenio: e di nuovo qui si può spiegare il carattere repentino, inatteso e non esplicitamente giustificato del salto che è necessario compiere, per ricavare un senso dal testo, con l'ipotesi che Paolo aveva enunciato circa il carattere privato e la destinazione solo personale del documento che leggiamo. Lui, Alessandro, ma solo lui era in grado di capire il senso del suo passaggio. Allora, da 112, 5 fino a 113, 12 Alessandro esporrebbe, sulla scorta della memoria da lui conservata delle lezioni del filosofo di Mitilene, le riflessioni originali del suo maestro intese a contrastare obiezioni che da qualche parte (non sappiamo quale, ma possiamo immaginarlo: probabilmente qualche platonico) erano state rivolte alla (supposta) teoria aristotelica del *nous thyrathen* e che sono anche riflessioni interessanti, perché Alessandro rivolgerà loro in conclusione obiezioni pesanti, rimproverando al suo maestro di aver inteso in un senso inammissibilmente stoicizzante la concezione aristotelica dell'intelletto «che viene dal di fuori».

Questo, mi pare, il senso più generale del lavoro di interpretazione che Paolo compì sul *De intellectu*: un lavoro a cui io anche oggi (quando sono passati sedici anni dalla sua pubblicazione) non avrei niente di essenziale da obiettare. Ovviamente, poi, ci sono dei passaggi del testo per i quali si potrebbe proporre qualche soluzione o qualche interpretazione differente da quella adottata da lui: ma sarebbe materia da discutere in un seminario filosofico-filologico tra esperti di testi alessandristi e aristotelici. Qui mi limito a segnalare un caso solo, che mi pare il più facile da illustrare con un minimo riferimento a testi greci.

Uno dei punti salienti della noetica aristotelica e alessandrista è quello che vuole che al grado più alto dell'intelletto in atto, cioè quello dell'intelletto divino, che funziona da motore immobile dell'universo (e, secondo Alessandro, sarebbe identico anche al *nous thyrathen*, l'intelletto che viene dal di fuori), a questo grado più elevato dell'intelletto, dunque, l'intelletto (divino) pensa (solo) se stesso. Noterò di passata che questa concezione dell'intelletto che pensa se stesso causò subito grossi problemi ai peripatetici: testimone evidente ne è la terza etica del *corpus* aristotelico, che sicuramente (secondo me e la maggioranza degli aristotelisti) non è autentica ed è opera di un mediocre peripatetico che scriveva verso la fine del quarto secolo o l'inizio del terzo, insomma nell'età di Teofrasto, venti o trent'anni dopo la morte di Aristotele. Secondo questa Etica, nota con il titolo latino di *Magna Moralia*, o

Grande etica, l'idea che il dio-intelletto che muove l'universo pensi per l'eternità solo se stesso può sembrare del tutto assurda: dice l'autore[9] che c'è infatti un «discorso corrente», un *logos legomenos* secondo il quale un uomo che si sprofondasse nella contemplazione o considerazione di se stesso non sarebbe un dio, ma un imbecille o un debole di mente. L'autore cita questa obiezione durissima contro una dottrina che a noi sembra capitale in Aristotele, ma non ne dice poi niente: la ricorda, non la approva né la contesta e passa subito ad altro. Ma non ci risulta che Alessandro abbia preso in considerazione questa o qualche altra vecchia obiezione già mossa ad Aristotele a proposito dell'intelletto del dio, il *nous poietikos* — motore immobile che penserebbe se stesso; una forte attenzione egli dedicò invece nel *De intellectu* a un altro, minimo, particolare della teoria aristotelica: perché infatti, secondo almeno un passo del *De anima* di Aristotele, la capacità di pensare se stesso apparterrebbe anche all'intelletto umano quando è in atto, quando *energei*: questo è detto in *De anima* III 4, 429b 9 e può essere confermato anche da un testo della *Metafisica*, Lambda 9, 1074b 35-36 — laddove, però, compare anche l'importante precisazione che questa capacità di pensare se stesso è soltanto un effetto secondario e collaterale, un *parergon*, dell'attività specificamente e primariamente propria dell'intelletto quando è in atto, quella di identificarsi completamente con l'oggetto conosciuto. Poiché vale sempre la regola generale della noetica aristotelica, che nell'atto dell'intellezione l'intelletto si identifica completamente con l'intelligibile pensato, sì che intelletto e intelligibile fanno una cosa sola, allora l'intelletto diventando identico all'intelligibile e questo a sua volta essendo divenuto identico all'intelletto ne viene che in questo intelligibile divenuto a sua volta intelletto l'intelletto umano vede, appunto *en parergo*, in linea secondaria e collaterale, anche se stesso.

Ora, sia nel suo trattato *De anima*, sia nello scritto *De intellectu* Alessandro tiene conto del testo di Aristotele nel *De anima* III 4 e cerca di spiegare che e come l'intelletto umano, quando è in attività e fa il proprio lavoro di pensare gli intelligibili, può esser detto pensare anche se stesso; ma la sua posizione riguardo a questa concezione che trovava appena accennata in Aristotele è, nei due scritti, parecchio diversa. Più lunga e articolata è la discussione che ne fa nel *De intellectu*, dove prospetta due spiegazioni sottilmente differenti; più breve è la relazione nel *De anima*, dove compare una sola delle due spiegazioni ricordate dal *De intellectu*, la più semplice, quella che già ho riferito poco fa come la spiegazione che si può adottare già a partire dal solo testo di Aristotele, *De anima* III 4. Si può dire insomma che nel *De anima* Alessandro abbrevia e semplifica la questione, come se volesse sbrigarla al più presto possibile. Perché mai assume questo atteggiamento nello scritto (il *De anima*) che solitamente è molto più ricco di particolari e di approfondimenti che il *De intellectu*?

È utile prestare attenzione al testo di questo secondo e minore scritto di Alessandro proprio nel passo in cui compaiono le due spiegazioni, alle p. 109, 4-22 — di cui il commento fornito da Paolo Accattino nelle pagine 47-48 dice già tutto l'essenziale, che è anche tutto sostanzialmente condivisibile; ma il dettato di Alessandro e lo sviluppo dell'argomentazione in quelle linee del testo sono talmente involuti e

9 Cf. Aristoteles. *Magna Moralia*, II 15, 1212b 37-1213a 7, ed. F. Susemihl, Lipsia, Teubner, 1883, p. 97-98.

singolari che a una prima esplorazione della traduzione e del commento di Paolo si può facilmente avere l'impressione di non ritrovarcisi. Alessandro esordisce infatti in 109,4-6 non già enunciando chiaramente una spiegazione, ma rifiutandone una, quella in cui l'intelletto penserebbe se stesso «in quanto è intelletto»; e prospetta subito la difficoltà in cui una simile interpretazione cadrebbe: «all'intelletto infatti *apparterrebbero*[10] insieme e riferiti allo stesso soggetto il pensare e l'essere pensato» — dove il senso dell'obiezione non è forse immediatamente evidente e poi non si dice affatto quale sarebbe il modo esatto di intendere il «pensar se stesso» dell'intelletto una volta che si sia scartata la possibilità che questo pensar se stesso avvenga «in quanto è intelletto». Per un tentativo di spiegazione e un'enunciazione completa e significante del modo in cui intendere il «pensar se stesso» senza intenderlo come «pensar se stesso in quanto è intelletto» bisognerà aspettare fino alle linee 109, 14-15 perché, in modo veramente sorprendente e difficilmente giustificabile, a 109,6 Alessandro prosegue dicendo: «ma [*scil.* 'bisognerà intendere il pensar se stesso'] *anche*[11] in questo modo, in quanto l'intelletto in atto è identico agli oggetti pensati in atto». Notare l'*anche*! Alessandro è dunque consapevole di introdurre qui un'altra e diversa spiegazione rispetto a quella che aveva lasciato in sospeso con la precedente e oscura allusione a un modo scorretto di interpretare le parole «pensare se stesso». Quest'altra spiegazione (fortunatamente, almeno questa) è invece subito chiara e, sviluppata nelle linee 109, 6-14, riposa interamente sull'idea avanzata da Aristotele stesso nel *De anima* secondo cui nell'atto del pensare l'intelletto e l'oggetto intelligibile vengono a identificarsi completamente.

Con le ultime parole di 109, 14 (*eti de legoit'an ktl.*) Alessandro riprende poi l'argomento lasciato tronco e oscuro in 109, 4-6 e si capisce finalmente quale doveva essere il corretto senso da attribuire al «pensar se stesso»: non in quanto l'intelletto lo farebbe «in quanto è intelletto», perché lo deve invece fare «in quanto è esso stesso intelligibile» (così in 109, 19-20); «se infatti fosse pensato da se stesso come intelletto e in quanto è intelletto, non penserebbe nient'altro che non fosse intelletto, sicché penserebbe soltanto se stesso» — conclusione che tuttavia può non risultare immediatamente evidente. Rimane infatti non detta del tutto chiaramente la ragione su cui essa riposa, che è da ricavarsi dalle linee 15-20. L'oggetto proprio dell'intelletto è sempre l'intelligibile e se l'intelletto avesse invece per proprio oggetto se stesso «come tale» (come intelletto e non come intelligibile), avrebbe anche se stesso per intelligibile «come tale», il che gli impedirebbe di avere intellezione di qualsiasi altro oggetto che non fosse anche intelletto e «come tale» pensato. L'intelletto insomma pensa se stesso solo in quanto può assumere se stesso a oggetto di pensiero come avviene per qualsiasi altro intelligibile, che non è da sé intelletto senza essere anche pensato. Si può comprendere facilmente che nel *De anima* Alessandro abbia preferito

10 Accattino traduce qui con «apparterranno», che può non alterare il significato della frase, ma penso che lo renda meno evidente: è meno agevole e immediato capire che si tratta di una conseguenza sgradita e negativa della precedente assunzione, tale da invalidare l'ipotesi che l'intelletto pensi se stesso «in quanto è intelletto».

11 Accattino traduce invece con «piuttosto», ma il greco *kai taute men ktl.* non mi pare lo consenta e il *kai* come «anche» ha un suo senso proprio nel contorto procedere del ragionamento di Alessandro.

evitare tutta questa contorta sottigliezza e abbia scelto di attenersi alla più semplice delle spiegazioni, quella già suggerita da Aristotele stesso.

Ebbene, questa scelta di Alessandro nel suo trattato *De anima* mi sembra notevole se la si confronta anche con alcune interpretazioni moderne a proposito del passo aristotelico di *De anima* III 4 da cui tutta la questione ha origine. Se ci si rivolge a due edizioni importanti del trattato di Aristotele ancora oggi largamente in uso come le due oxoniensi, l'*editio minor*, critica e con il solo testo greco, e l'edizione maggiore accompagnata da introduzione e commentario, entrambe curate da un gigante dell'Aristotelismo del ventesimo secolo come fu David Ross, nonché il commentario curato da un altro eminente studioso della filosofia antica che fu in quel tempo Willy Theiler, si ha la sorpresa di trovare che nel loro testo di *De an.* III 4 l'intelletto (umano) che pensa se stesso non compare nemmeno: essi hanno cioè accettato la congettura di un altro ottimo studioso aristotelico di fine ottocento, Ingram Bywater, che in Aristotele 429b9 quell'intelletto umano che pensa se stesso addirittura lo cancellava perché condannava la lezione che è dei manoscritti, ma anche delle parafrasi che si leggono in Temistio, in Simplicio e in Filopono, *hautos de hauton tote dynatai noein* («l'intelletto è allora [*scil.* quando è in grado di passare all'atto del pensiero] capace di pensare se stesso»). Questa lezione sia dei manoscritti sia della tradizione indiretta fu appunto emendata da Bywater in *hautos di'hautou… dynatai noein*, che vorrebbe dire che «l'intelletto è allora capace di pensare da sé solo», giustificabile secondo i tre studiosi che ho già ricordato, i due inglesi e Theiler, con il fatto che soltanto due righe prima (429b7) Aristotele aveva detto che c'è un momento in cui l'intelletto è finalmente in grado di pensare da sé solo, *di'hautou* (cioè, direi, quando non deve più compiere l'operazione preparatoria di astrazione delle forme intelligibili dalla materia). La giustificazione ultima che tutti questi studiosi danno per il loro intervento sul testo è poi sempre la medesima, scritta con un certo candore da Ross nel suo commento al passo: non avrebbe senso a questo punto parlare del pensiero di se stesso che ha l'intelletto. Perché, vien voglia di replicare subito, ha forse più senso il testo se emendandolo gli si fa ripetere quel che aveva già detto solo due righe sopra?

È sorprendente che tre grandi interpreti di Aristotele abbiano compiuto un'operazione simile su un testo la cui integrità è garantita dai manoscritti più antichi e migliori e, ancora risalendo molto indietro nel tempo rispetto ai nostri manoscritti, anche da commentatori anteriori a questi codici, come Simplicio, Filopono e Temistio.

Non solo, ma è evidente che anche Alessandro con le sue parole consegnate sia nel *De anima*, sia nel *De intellectu*, ci assicura che da 180 a 200 anni circa prima di Temistio nel testo di Aristotele la lezione era già quella dei nostri codici, *de hauton*, non *di'hautou* (e Paolo Accattino nel suo commento ha già notato e perfettamente giudicato tutta la questione filologica e testuale). Per concludere, dunque, la lezione valida è quella dei codici e dei commentatori, la congettura moderna è completamente sbagliata, Aristotele disse davvero che l'intelletto umano, quando è in atto, è in grado di pensare (anche) se stesso.

Tuttavia la storia potrebbe non finire qui, perché l'atteggiamento di Alessandro tra *De anima* e *De intellectu* può suggerirci qualche altra considerazione. Una considerazione che non mi venne in mente di fare quando discussi con Paolo il suo lavoro e che mi permetto di aggiungere ora qui, proprio e soltanto come complemento del lavoro di

lui e con la convinzione di fare qualcosa che a lui sarebbe piaciuto molto: il tentativo di far avanzare di un passettino anche piccolissimo la comprensione dei testi che studiamo. Se teniamo conto della notevole differenza che ho già segnalato a proposito del diverso trattamento che la proposizione aristotelica di *De an*. III 4, 429b9, ottiene nel due lavori di Alessandro, cioè il *De anima* personale e il *De intellectu* (due spiegazioni proposte nel *De intellectu*, una sola nel *De anima*); se accettiamo, sulla base di ogni altra considerazione che Paolo e io stesso insieme avevamo già fatto a proposito della probabile successione cronologica dei due scritti alessandristi — ammettendo come la conclusione più plausibile che il *De intellectu* preceda il *De anima* e questo secondo scritto, posteriore anche al commentario esegetico dedicato al *De anima* aristotelico che a noi non è giunto (e su tale commentario sostanzialmente fondato) rappresenti la posizione più matura raggiunta da Alessandro a proposito della psicologia e della noetica aristotelica — se accettiamo tutto questo, allora la semplificazione che Alessandro avrebbe dato nel suo *De anima* alla questione dell'intelletto umano che è capace di pensare se stesso diventa significativa.

Alessandro, cioè, alla fine rinuncia ad approfondire con interpretazioni alternative una questione che evidentemente o non lo interessava più troppo, o forse addirittura lo metteva in difficoltà senza che egli sapesse darne una soluzione netta: che cosa intendeva dire Aristotele quando notava che all'intelletto umano apparteneva anche la capacità di pensare se stesso.

E così possiamo forse ritornare a concedere una certa stima almeno alle motivazioni che spinsero a correggere il testo di Aristotele i nostri otto- e novecenteschi grandi colleghi e maestri, i Bywater, Ross, Theiler. Non certo per accettare la loro operazione sul testo, sicuramente molto imprudente, ma perché non è affatto sbagliato, anzi legittimo e interessante, domandarsi che cosa poteva voler dire Aristotele quando attribuiva all'intelletto umano che passa all'atto la capacità di pensare (ma *en parergo*, solo come effetto collaterale) anche se stesso. A che giovava questo apparente allargamento o ampliamento di conoscenze, per altro svalutato dall'ammissione che si trattasse di un effetto soltanto di secondaria importanza? C'era qualche acquisizione cognitiva nuova e maggiore che allora l'intelletto umano avrebbe compiuto pensando se stesso? E che cosa precisamente poteva significare per l'intelletto umano «pensare se stesso»? L'unica risposta che io abbia trovato è abbozzata un po' tortuosamente in un altro buon commentario inglese al *De anima* aristotelico dei primi del '900, quello di Robert Drew Hicks[12]: pensare se stesso *en parergo* dovrebbe significare semplicemente che l'intelletto acquisisce la consapevolezza di star pensando. Ammettiamolo per disperazione, ma che cosa ci guadagna la teoria di Aristotele sull'intelletto umano? È così importante potersi dire, quando si riflette su qualcosa, «adesso sto pensando»? Come mai Aristotele non sentì la necessità di dire qualcosa di più e di più chiaro non solo sull'intelletto agente divino (che dica poco a questo proposito, credo che nessuno oserebbe negarlo), ma anche su questa nuova proprietà che assegnava all'intelletto umano? Perché non se ne servì in alcun modo e in alcuna altra parte dei suoi scritti per arricchire, approfondire, completare il discorso sulle

12 Aristoteles. *De anima*, ed. R. D. Hicks, Cambridge, [Cambridge] University Press, 1907.

capacità cognitive dell'intelletto umano? In conseguenza di ragionamenti come questi non avrà avuto anche Alessandro perplessità sul reale significato e sull'importanza di quelle parole del *De anima* del maestro? Forse proprio le stesse perplessità che indussero poi i nostri eminenti colleghi di Otto- e Novecento a intervenire sul testo? Non è possibile rispondere a simili interrogativi, è ovvio.

Mi sembra importante e conforme alla curiosità intellettuale e al rigore, al serissimo metodo di lavoro di Paolo Accattino, almeno porsi le domande e rimanere alla fine sempre consapevoli che qualcosa rimane ancora da capire. Altri, probabilmente, capirà meglio di noi in futuro.

AMOS BERTOLACCI

"The Excellent among the Earlier Scholars"

*Alexander of Aphrodisias in Avicenna's Metaphysics**

Introduction

The extent, relevance, and intricacies of the transmission into Arabic of the works of Alexander of Aphrodisias, as a fundamental stage of the progressive "transformation" of Greek philosophy that took place in subsequent centuries across different cultures and religious environments, are well known[1]. Within the larger framework of the Arabic reception of Alexander, metaphysics holds pivotal relevance, both because metaphysical writings ascribed to Alexander unknown otherwise in Greek are preserved in Arabic, and because these writings have contributed decisively to shape the view of metaphysics that Arabic philosophers advocated. A specimen of the complexity of this historical process is analyzed here: on the one hand, scholars debate whether the work of metaphysics attributed to Alexander that we are going to face is authentic or not; on the other hand, the influence of this work on Arabic-Islamic philosophy is undisputable. In what follows, I will not take a stance on the authorship of the work of the *Alexander arabus* at stake, and I will focus only on its

* I am very grateful to Matteo Di Giovanni and David Twetten for their helpful comments on a first draft of this paper. Some parts of the present contribution have been presented at the workshop *Le désir*, GRAMATA, Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne, 16 February 2018 (org. J.-B. Brenet, P.-M. Morel), under the title "'Desiring' or 'Desired'? On a Key Passage of Alexander of Aphrodisias' Cosmology in the Arabic Tradition": my sincere gratitude goes to the organizers and the other participants for their insightful comments. The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Seventh Framework Program (FP7/2007-2013)/ERC grant agreement n. 339621.

1 For basic information on the author and his influence, and abundant references to further bibliography, see R. Goulet, M. Aouad, "Alexandros d'Aphrodisias", in R. Goulet (ed.), *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*, vol. 1, Paris, 1989, p. 125-137; S. Fazzo, "Alexandros d'Aphrodisias", in R. Goulet (ed.), *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*, Supplement, Paris, 2003, p. 61-70; Ead., *Alexander Arabus: Studi sulla tradizione araba dell'aristotelismo greco*, Pistoia, Editrice petite plaisance, 2018; D. Frede, "Alexander of Aphrodisias", E. N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2013 Edition), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/alexander-aphrodisias/>.

Amos Bertolacci • IMT School for Advanced Studies, Lucca. amos.bertolacci@imtlucca.it.

Alexander of Aphrodisias in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, ed. by Pietro B. Rossi, Matteo Di Giovanni, and Andrea A. Robiglio, Turnhout, 2021 (*Studia Artistarum*, 45), p. 33-58
© BREPOLS PUBLISHERS
10.1484/M.SA-EB.5.120535

impact on a prime exponent of the philosophy written in Arabic within the Muslim world during the Middle Ages.

A glaring example of the centrality of Alexander's metaphysics in medieval Arabic-Islamic philosophy is provided by the most important philosopher of the so-called "classical" or "formative" phase of *falsafa*, namely Avicenna (d. 428H/1037). Alexander of Aphrodisias is surely one of the main Greek sources of Avicenna's metaphysics, as three main facts attest[2]. First, in the most important metaphysical work by Avicenna — the *Ilāhiyyāt* (*Science of Divine Things*), fourth and final part of the philosophical *summa* entitled *Kitāb al-Šifāʾ* (*Book of the Cure* or *of the Healing*) — this author is quoted explicitly a number of times that is significantly higher than in the case of other post-Aristotelian authors. Second, Avicenna provides precious information on the work of Alexander he is referring to, of which he exceptionally mentions, besides the author, also the title. Third, contrary to Avicenna's usual practice, in at least one case the doctrine of Alexander in these quotations is reported by Avicenna almost *verbatim*. More specifically, with four explicit quotations, Alexander is the author most frequently quoted in an explicit way by Avicenna in the *Ilāhiyyāt* among post-Aristotelian philosophers and scientists. Moreover, Avicenna mentions the title of Alexander's work at issue together with its author, a privilege that he accords, besides Alexander, only to Aristotle. Finally, the literality by means of which Avicenna reports the text of the work of Alexander at stake resembles the literality that he reserves to some passages of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*[3].

The importance of Avicenna's recourse to Alexander of Aphrodisias in metaphysics can be approached from three interrelated points of view. First, from a pre-Avicennian perspective, we are faced with the issue of the transmission and preservation of Alexander's works from Greek into Arabic: in fact, the work ascribed to Alexander that Avicenna most frequently and visibly quotes is not extant in Greek, being preserved only in Syriac and in Arabic. Second, from an intra-Avicennian perspective, Alexander lies at the heart of Avicenna's metaphysics, both in content and in intent: in his metaphysical works throughout his career, Avicenna keeps on quoting key doctrines of Alexander, and Alexander instantiates for him the appealing role of a commentator of Aristotle who is also an independent thinker. Finally, there is a post-Avicennian perspective, since the most informative of Avicenna's quotations of Alexander is deformed by the Latin translation of Avicenna's *Ilāhiyyāt*, where the reference to Alexander is obfuscated and virtually lost, with dramatic effects on the readers of the Avicenna Latinus: Albert the Great, in particular, takes the work of

---

2 A trustworthy witness and a well-informed reader of Avicenna like Averroes, in his *Long Commentary* on the *Metaphysics*, affirms repeatedly the influence of Alexander on Avicenna (Averroes Cordubensis. *Tafsīr Mā baʿd aṭ-ṭabīʿat ("Grand Commentaire" de la Métaphysique)*, ed. M. Bouyges, 3 vols., Bibliotheca Arabica Scholasticorum: Série Arabe, Beirut, Dar el-Machreq Editeurs, vol. 3, p. 1423, 18; p. 1426, 12; p. 1436, 6).

3 I have summarily dealt with this topic in A. Bertolacci, *The Reception of Aristotle's* Metaphysics *in Avicenna's* Kitāb al-Šifāʾ: *A Milestone of Western Metaphysical Thought*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2006, p. 443-447.

Alexander mentioned by Avicenna to be a work of Aristotle, which he regards as the original core of the *Liber de Causis*.

In other words, the issue under discussion here represents an interesting case of Greek into Arabic into Latin transmission of three different "Alexanders": a "lost" Alexander, i.e. the possible Greek ancestor of the Alexander translated through Syriac into Arabic and quoted by Avicenna; a "virtual" Alexander, the Alexander of the Arabic tradition recalled by Avicenna at key junctures of his metaphysical project in works spanning over an extensive leg of his career; and a "disguised" Alexander, the Alexander blurred by the Latin translation and consequently misconceived by Albert the Great and other Latin readers[4].

The present contribution consists of five sections. In the first, a general overview of the presence of Alexander in Avicenna's *Ilāhiyyāt* is provided, whereas the second section is devoted to conveying some basic information on the work by Alexander on which Avicenna relies. In the third section, the first three quotations of Alexander by Avicenna in the *Ilāhiyyāt* will be examined, showing their continuity in Avicenna's works from the early period until the maturity, and offering some clues on the precise meaning of the expressions by means of which Avicenna refers in them to Alexander and his work. The fourth section will provide some insights into the doctrine at stake in these quotations, namely the issue of cosmological noetics in general, and of the desire that the heavenly spheres have for an intellectual principle separated from them in particular. Finally, some arguments will be advanced to corroborate the traditional identification with Alexander of the author quoted by Avicenna in a further passage of the *Ilāhiyyāt* (fifth section).

---

4 This threefold line of transmission has received great attention in recent scholarship, as witnessed by the studies of Charles Genequand, Dimitri Gutas, and Alain De Libera, respectively. Genequand, in his edition of the Arabic text with facing English translation and commentary of the work of Alexander quoted by Avicenna, rightly points to this latter as one of its main Arabic receivers (see C. Genequand, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on the Cosmos*, Leiden-Boston-Köln, Brill 2001, p. 24-25; cf. Alexandre d'Aphrodise, *Les principes du tout selon la doctrine d'Aristote*. Introduction, texte arabe, traduction et commentaire par C. Genequand, Paris, Vrin, 2017, p. 45-46). Gutas, on the other hand, finds in the different ways according to which Avicenna refers to Alexander in his various works (from being named "Alexander", *al-Iskandar*, to being described as a "Peripatetic scholar who validated the thought of the First Master", i.e. of Aristotle) a glaring example of how Avicenna's attitude towards previous philosophers evolved, passing from reliance on the authority of individuals, mentioned through their proper names, to adherence to the doctrines advocated by these authors, referred to by means of more descriptive formulas (D. Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition. Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works*. Second Revised and Enlarged Edition, Including an Inventory of Avicenna's Authentic Works, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2014, p. 328-329). De Libera, finally, has aptly remarked the thorough Avicennian background of Albert's view of the composition of the *Liber de Causis*: first, Albert takes from Avicenna the information on the work of Aristotle (in fact: of Alexander) that he regards as the backbone of the *Liber*; second, Albert thinks that doctrines of Avicenna, among others, have been added to the Aristotelian skeleton of the work in the process of composition; third, the compiler of the *Liber* is, according to Albert, a certain David Iudaeus whom he probably identifies with the Avendauth translator of Avicenna (see A. De Libera, "Albert le Grand et Thomas d'Aquin interprètes du *Liber de Causis*", in *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 74 (1990), p. 347-378).

Most of Avicenna's debt towards Alexander of Aphrodisias in the *Ilāhiyyāt* regards issues of psychology in application to cosmology, an area of Alexander's thought that Paolo Accattino has masterly analyzed and divulged. The consideration of Avicenna's attitude towards Alexander on these issues is therefore an indirect way of honoring the memory of this pioneer and leader of the scholarship on Alexander, in so far as it shows a significant instance of the later impact of the theoretical area of Alexander's thought that he has rightly selected as worth special attention[5].

Alexander of Aphrodisias in Avicenna's *Ilāhiyyāt*

Table 1 is a synopsis of the philosophers and scientists, and/or of their works, that Avicenna quotes in the *Ilāhiyyāt* either nominally or by means of definite descriptions. The information regarding Alexander is marked in bold.

Author	Proper name of the author	Definite description of the author	Title of his work(s)	Definite description of his work(s)	Indefinite description of the author/ work(s)
Abū l-Ḥasan al-ʿĀmirī		1			
Alexander of Aphrodisias [together with Themistius]		**2 + [2]**		**1 "his treatise that is about the principles of the universe"**	
Anaxagoras	1				
Aristotle		10 (11?) "First Teacher"	1 "Analytics"	2 (3?) "First Teaching"; "Books of Ethics"; "Teaching" (?)	
Astronomers (pre-Ptolemaic)		1			
Astronomers (post-Ptolemaic)		1			

5 See in particular, P. Accattino, "Alessandro d'Afrodisia e gli astri: L'anima e la luce", in *Atti dell'Accademia delle scienze di Torino*, 126 (1992), p. 39-62.

Author	**Proper name of the author**	**Definite description of the author**	**Title of his work(s)**	**Definite description of his work(s)**	**Indefinite description of the author/ work(s)**
Euclid				1 "Euclid's Book"	
Megarics	1				
Plato [and derived adjective]	2 [+ 2]				
Ptolemy			1 "Almagest"		
Pythagoreans	4				
Socrates	2				
Themistius [together with **Alexander of Aphrodisias**]		1 + [**2**]			
Others					*passim*

The table evidences several interesting background facts. First, if we consider that the *Ilāhiyyāt* is a very extensive work (453 pages in the standard Cairo edition of the Arabic text), the quotations of identifiable authors that Avicenna intersperses in it are relatively few (columns 2-5): the majority of the quotations that can be found in it are indefinite descriptions (last column), like "someone says", in which the identity of the referent remains obscure and historical persons mix with fictive interlocutors[6]. All this can be taken as a sign of Avicenna's originality in the *Ilāhiyyāt*, at least from the compositional and literary point of view, although the possibility of silent dependences on, and underground influences by, a wider array of sources cannot be excluded. Second, only one predecessor in Arabic philosophy is quoted by Avicenna, being severely criticized by him, namely Abū l-Ḥasan al-ʿĀmirī, whereas all the other quoted authors are Greek philosophers and scientists: this indicates that Avicenna favors in metaphysics, as in all the other sections of the *Šifāʾ*, the ancient Greek tradition. Third, among the authors referred to through quotations that are not indefinite, Aristotle has a place of eminence, as we should expect on account of the avowed Peripatetic character of the *summa* to which the *Ilāhiyyāt* belongs; in this context, Aristotle serves also as source of information on other pre-Aristotelian authors that Avicenna quotes, from Anaxagoras until Plato. Finally, Avicenna quotes not only

6 The range of "positive" sources of the *Ilāhiyyāt* can be further restricted if we consider that the nominal quotations of Anaxagoras, the Megarics, Plato, the Pythagoreans, and Socrates are mainly taken from Aristotle. Moreover, Avicenna cites critically all these authors, as well as another one (Abū l-Ḥasan al-ʿĀmirī, see below).

philosophers but also scientists — i.e. Ptolemy, pre-Ptolemaic and post-Ptolemaic astronomers, and Euclid — as a sign of the close interaction that philosophy entertains with science in this work and in Arabic metaphysics in general.

Against this background, it is worth noting for our purposes that, among philosophers other than Aristotle, Alexander turns out to be the most relevant. On the one hand, he receives a considerable number of quotations, namely four, an amount which exceeds, if we exclude Aristotle, the citations of all other authorities. Second, Avicenna unusually refers also to the work of Alexander at stake, a practice that he adopts only for two other authors besides Aristotle (i.e. Euclid, and Ptolemy), both of which are scientists; moreover, Avicenna quotes Alexander's work by means of an expression that resembles in many ways the work's actual title, as we are going to see. Finally, although in two cases out of four Avicenna quotes Alexander together with Themistius as disciple of Aristotle, the fact that he quotes him also alone, independently from both Aristotle and Themistius, and the formulas that he employs to refer to him in all cases, make clear that Avicenna takes Alexander to be a thinker worth self-standing attention and as the commentator of Aristotle *par excellence*: in both respects, Alexander is one of the main Greek philosophers in Avicenna's eyes.

As we will see in the following sections, these recurrent quotations of Alexander, and, with him, of Themistius, concentrate in the last part of the *Ilāhiyyāt* (treatises VIII-X) devoted to theological matters. On account of their quantity and style, we are thus entitled to infer that Avicenna's philosophical theology in the *Ilāhiyyāt* has a solid "Peripatetic" background, and, within it, a noticeable "Alexandrian" mark, intentionally emphasized by Avicenna himself; in other words, Avicenna outspokenly and forcefully warns the reader that the followers of Aristotle in general, and Alexander in particular, hold a foremost position among the sources of his philosophical theology; in so doing, he also alerts the modern interpreter against the risk of overemphasizing the weight of other writings, which Avicenna does not take care of mentioning, either because he neglects them at all or because they exert only a remote and indirect influence on his metaphysics.

The *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull* (*Treatise on the Speech regarding the Principles of the Universe*)

The metaphysical work that Avicenna ascribes to Alexander of Aphrodisias and mentions through the expression "his treatise that is about the principles of the universe" (*risālatuhū llatī fī mabādiʾ al-kull*) is the *Maqāla fī l-Qawl fī mabādiʾ al-kull bi-ḥasab raʾy Arisṭāṭālis al-faylasūf* (*Treatise on the Speech regarding the Principles of the Universe according to the Opinion of Aristotle the Philosopher*, abbreviated in what follows as *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull*)[7]. As already mentioned, the authorship of this work

7 The work can now be consulted in the editions and the facing English and French translations by C. Genequand quoted above (n. 4). For a previous edition and French translation, see *Maqālat al-Iskandar al-Afrūdīsī fī l-qawl fī mabādiʾ al-kull bi-ḥasab raʾy Arisṭāṭālis al-faylasūf*, in *Arisṭū ʿinda l-ʿArab*, ed. ʿA. Badawī, Cairo,

is debated, and among scholars some maintain its authenticity[8], some question it *in toto*[9], some others take its second part to be spurious[10]. The affiliation of the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull* with Aristotle and the Peripatetic tradition surfaces not only in the title, by means of the references to "Aristotle's opinion" (*raʾy Arisṭūṭālis*), but also in the various mentions of Aristotle in the text[11]. This, of course, does not mean that the treatise provides an unmodified account of Aristotle's standpoint: significant departures from original Aristotelian teaching — congruent or compatible with Alexander's interpretation of it — can be detected[12], and in the epilogue the author presents the work under a personal light, as the result of "what we have come to believe and think by way of reflection and philosophizing"[13]. In fact, the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull* is "a discussion of *Metaphysics* Λ, expounding the theory of the unmoved mover and the order of the universe"[14], integrated with motives taken from Theophrastus' *Metaphysics*, the ps.-Aristotelian *De Mundo*[15], as well as from Stoic philosophy[16].

In recent scholarship Alexander's treatise is rightly depicted as "Ibn Sīnā's main inspiration throughout book IX of the *Ilāhiyyāt*", so that "Ibn Sīnā's more

---

Maktabat al-nahḍa al-miṣriyya, Cairo 1947, p. 253-277, and ʿA. Badawī, *La transmission de la philosophie grecque au monde arabe*, Paris, Vrin, 1968, p. 121-139.

8 S. Fazzo, M. Zonta, "Towards a Textual History and Reconstruction of Alexander of Aphrodisias's Treatise *On the Principles of the Universe*", in *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 59 (2014), p. 91-116.

9 Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, p. 247, n. 46.

10 Alexandre d'Aphrodise, *Les principes du tout selon la doctrine d'Aristote*, p. 31. The second part of the work (§§ 86-151 in Genequand's edition) looks like a later patchwork, which is totally absent in the Syriac abridgment, and which contains, for example, excerpts of Alexander's lost commentary on the *Physics*, reported in the third person ("Alexander says etc.").

11 Genequand, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on the Cosmos*, p. 42, 9; p. 44, 3; p. 88, 13; p. 90, 5; p. 92, 3; p. 102, 11.

12 Genequand, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on the Cosmos*, p. 7-8, 10, records among the main doctrinal variations of the treatise with respect to Aristotle's teaching (as this latter is presented in mainstream contemporary scholarship) the attribution of an inner "inclination" to the four elements as cause of their movement, the firm endorsement of the animation of all heavenly bodies, and the simplified account of the heavenly motion by means of only eight celestial spheres. Celestial animation is pivotal to Alexander's interpretation of Aristotle's theory of the Unmoved Mover as object of desire in *Metaph*. Lambda 7; likewise, in a passage of Averroes's *Long Commentary* on *Metaph*. Lambda 8, Alexander is reported to stress that the number of the heavenly spheres posited by Aristotle *ibid*. is not Aristotle's own point of view, but is taken from the astronomical theories current at his times (eight celestial spheres are posited by Alexander in *Quaestio* I.25). I thank the anonymous referee for having brought this point to my attention.

13 See Genequand, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on the Cosmos*, p. 124, 9.

14 Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, p. 245. The passage reported above occurs verbatim identical in the first edition of Gutas's work of 1988, p. 215. On the relation of Alexander's treatise with book Lambda of the *Metaphysics*, see S. Fazzo, "L'exégèse de *Métaphysique Lambda* dans le *De principiis* et dans la *Quaestio* I.1 d'Alexandre d'Aphrodise", in *Laval Théologique Philosophique*, 64 (2008), p. 607-626.

15 See the remarks by Genequand, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on the Cosmos*, p. 5 and n. 9.

16 See S. Pines, "The spiritual force permeating the cosmos according to a passage in the *Treatise on the principles of the all* ascribed to Alexander of Aphrodisias", in *The collected works of Shlomo Pines*, vol. 2, *Studies in Arabic versions of Greek texts and in medieval science*, Jerusalem-Leiden, Magnes Press Hebrew University, 1986, p. 252-266.

developed and … more coherent system is largely inspired" by it[17]. This massive impact of Alexander's treatise on Avicenna is consonant with its pervasive influence in Arabic and Hebrew philosophy[18]. Comparable to the extent of the diffusion of this work in *falsafa* is the variety of its ways of transmission: we know of two different recensions of the longer Arabic version, as well as of a Syriac and an Arabic abridgment[19].

---

17 See Genequand, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on the Cosmos*, p. 24-25. The points of Avicenna's dependence on Alexander underscored by Genequand are the idea that the First Principle cannot be demonstrated apodictically, expressed by Avicenna in *Ilāhiyyāt* IX, 1; the description of the heavenly movement in chapter IX, 2 (see C. Martini, "ΩS ERΩMENON: Alcune interpretazioni di *Metaph.* Λ 7", in *Aristotele e i suoi esegeti neoplatonici: Logica e ontologia nelle interpretazioni greche e arabe*, a cura di V. Celluprica e C. D'Ancona con la collaborazione di R. Chiaradonna, Napoli, Bibliopolis, 2004, p. 211-243, p. 237-239); and the notion of the heavenly bodies' influence on the sublunary world in chapter IX, 5 (see G. Freudenthal, "The Astrologization of the Aristotelian Cosmos: Celestial Influences on the Sublunary World in Aristotle, Alexander of Aphrodisias, and Averroes", in A. C. Bowen, C. Wildberg (eds.), *New Perspectives on Aristotle's* De caelo, , Leiden-Boston, Brill 2009, p. 239-281). One may wonder whether the very presence of celestial souls (absent in al-Fārābī's *Mabādiʾ Ārāʾ Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila, Principles of the Opinions of the Inhabitants of the Excellent City*) in Avicenna's account of the heavenly world in IX, 2-4, depends on the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull* (see p. 46, 9-50, 1 = §§7-10). Avicenna's notion of 'necessary on account of something else' is regarded by Averroes, in the commentary on *Physics* Θ (Lat. transl., f. 426vb), as influenced by Alexander's doctrine according to which celestial bodies acquire eternity from their immaterial movers (C. Steel, "'Omnis corporis potentia est finita'. L'interprétation d'un principe aristotélicien: de Proclus à S. Thomas", in J. P. Beckmann, L. Honnefelder, G. Schrimpf, G. Wieland (eds.), *Philosophie im Mittelalter. Entwicklungslinien und Paradigmen*, Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag, 1987, p. 213-224, p. 216 and nn. 11-12). Steel remarks that this doctrine is absent in Alexander's Greek works: if this is not a Philoponian tenet disguised under Alexander's authority (A. Hasnawi, "Alexandre d'Aphrodise vs Jean Philopon: Notes sur quelques traités d'Alexandre 'perdus' en grec, conservés en arabe", in *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 4 (1995), p. 53-109) or a motive present in Alexander's commentary on *Metaphysics* Lambda, it cannot be excluded that Averroes is envisaging here Alexander's repeated contention in *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull* that the heavenly bodies are eternal and depend on the eternal First Mover (see the remarks in Genequand, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on the Cosmos*, p. 15-16). G. Endress maintains that the epitome of the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull* influenced Avicenna's *Kitāb al-Mabdaʾ wa-l-maʿād* (*Book of Provenance and Destination*) — and, through Avicenna, Mullā Ṣadrā — in "Alexander Arabus on the First Cause. Aristotle's First Mover in an Arabic Treatise attributed to Alexander of Aphrodisias", in C. D'Ancona, G. Serra (eds.), *Aristotele e Alessandro d'Afrodisia nella tradizione araba*, Padova, Il Poligrafo, 2002, p. 19-74, p. 57-61.

18 For the Arabic reception of this work, see Genequand, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on the Cosmos*, p. 20-26. One of the testimonies of the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull* not taken into account by Genequand is Abū Bišr Mattà Ibn Yūnus (see D. Janos, "'Active Nature' and Other Striking Features of Abū Bishr Mattā ibn Yūnus's Cosmology as Reconstructed from His Commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*", in Id. (ed.), *Ideas in Motion in Baghdad and Beyond: Philosophical and Theological Exchanges between Christians and Muslims in the Third/Ninth and Fourth/Tenth Centuries*, Leiden, Brill, 2016, p. 135-177, p. 161-164). On the influence of the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull* on Maimonides, see S. Pines, "The Limitations of Human Knowledge According to al-Farabi, Ibn Bajja, and Maimonides", in I. Twersky (ed.), *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press, 1979, vol. I, p. 82-109 (p. 101 and n. 86); Genequand, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on the Cosmos*, p. 26.

19 The Greek original of this work being lost, the identity of the Arabic translator is difficult to ascertain and remains unassessed. According to Genequand, the translation of the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull* can be credited to either Isḥāq Ibn Ḥunayn (d. 910 or 911) or Ibrāhīm Ibn ʿAbd Allāh, who was alive during Yaḥyà Ibn ʿAdī's (d. 974) lifetime according to the *Fihrist* (see Alexandre d'Aphrodise, *Les principes du tout selon la doctrine d'Aristote*, p. 15). A Syriac version of this work is attested by Sergius of Reš'aynā (see

One may wonder why Avicenna prefers the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull* over other work by Alexander, especially this latter's commentary on the *Metaphysics*, which Avicenna never explicitly quotes, either in the *Ilāhiyyāt* or elsewhere. Avicenna's silence on Alexander's commentary is even more remarkable if we consider that, before him, al-Fārābī emphatically mentions this commentary in the introduction of the prolegomenon to Aristotle's *Metaphysics* that he authored[20], and, after him, Averroes quotes extensively the extant fragments of Alexander's original commentary on *Metaphysics* Lambda in his Long Commentary thereupon[21]. When compared with the many quotations of the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull* in the *Ilāhiyyāt* and elsewhere, the absence of any explicit quotation of Alexander's commentary on Lambda in Avicenna's works is somewhat surprising, and has prompted scholars to wonder whether Avicenna was at all acquainted with Alexander's commentary on the *Metaphysics*[22]. On the other hand, a comparison between the extant fragments of Alexander's commentary on *Metaphysics* Lambda and Avicenna's *Ilāhiyyāt* discloses some resemblances, although the results of this kind of investigation do not exceed the level of mere doctrinal similarities[23].

H. Hugonnard-Roche, "Note sur Sergius de Reš'ainā, traducteur du grec en syriaque et commentateur d'Aristote", in G. Endress, R. Kruk (eds.), *The Ancient Tradition in Christian and Islamic Hellenism: Studies on the Transmission of Greek Philosophy and Sciences dedicated to H. J. Drossaart Lulofs on his ninetieth birthday*, Leiden, Brill, 1997, p. 121-143, p. 126). The critical edition of the Arabic epitome is available in G. Endress, "Alexander Arabus on the First Cause: Aristotle's First Mover in an Arabic Treatise attributed to Alexander of Aphrodisias".

20 *Treatise … on the Goals of the Sage* [= Aristotle] *in each treatise of the book marked by letters* [= *Metaphysics*] (*Maqāla … fī Aġrāḍ al-ḥakīm fī kull maqāla min al-kitāb al-mawsūm bi-l-ḥurūf*), ed. F. Dieterici, Leiden, Brill 1890, p. 34-38, p. 34, 14-18. On this work, see Bertolacci, *The Reception of Aristotle's* Metaphysics *in Avicenna's* Kitāb al-Šifāʾ, p. 65-103.

21 The *status quaestionis* on the fragments of Alexander's commentary on Lambda preserved in Averroes' *Long Commentary* on the *Metaphysics* is drawn in M. Di Giovanni, O. Primavesi, "Who Wrote Alexander's Commentary on Metaphysics Λ? New Light on the Syro-Arabic Tradition", in C. Horn (ed.), *Aristotle's Metaphysics Lambda—New Essays: Proceedings of the 13th Conference of the Karl and Gertrud-Abel Foundation, Bonn, November, 28th-December 1st, 2010*, Berlin-Boston: Walter de Gruyter, p. 11-66: Di Giovanni and Primavesi notice that some fragments of the commentary on Lambda supposedly by Alexander preserved by Averroes cannot be ascribed to Alexander without qualification, since they show signs of later modifications, and advance the hypothesis that the Arabic version depends on a revision of Alexander's original commentary by a Greek author. For all the relevant information on Averroes' recourse to Alexander of Aphrodisias in his *Long Commentary* on the *Metaphysics*, see, besides this article by Di Giovanni and Primavesi, the contribution of Matteo Di Giovanni in the present volume and the bibliography quoted therein.

22 A. Hasnawi, "Un élève d'Abū Bišr Mattà b. Yūnus: Abū ʿAmr al-Ṭabarī", in *Bulletin d'Études Orientales*, 48 (1996), p. 35-55, p. 39, n. 26, maintains that it is unlikely that Avicenna had access to Alexander's commentary, since he does not quote it explicitly anywhere, contrary to what he does with Alexander's *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull* and Themistius' paraphrase of Λ.

23 A preliminary comparison between the extant fragments of Alexander's commentary on *Metaphysics* Lambda and Avicenna's *Ilāhiyyāt* has shown similarities concerning the view of the structure of metaphysics, its method, and the centrality accorded to book Γ (see Bertolacci, *The Reception of Aristotle's* Metaphysics *in Avicenna's* Kitāb al-Šifāʾ, Chapter 5, §6.4; Chapter 6, §4.2; Chapter 9, §5.1, respectively). Conversely, Avicenna might have disagreed with some theses advocated by Alexander, as a commentator of Aristotle, in this commentary (see below, n. 27). The part of Alexander's original commentary on the *Metaphysics*

Without adopting the *extrema ratio* of Avicenna's total ignorance of one work of Alexander well known in Arabic like the commentary on the *Metaphysics*, a possible explanation of his decided preference for the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull* is to observe that this work consists of a cosmological-theological expansion of the very succinct philosophical theology provided by Aristotle in the last chapters of *Metaphysics* Lambda. In so doing, the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull* serves the double purpose of being an exegesis of *Metaphysics* Lambda and, at the same time, of containing doctrinal accretions with respect to Aristotle's text that a commentary *stricto sensu* cannot convey with the same systematicity[24]. Thanks to the Peripatetic seal conveyed by the name of Alexander, this expansion could have been felt by Avicenna more authoritative than the one provided by the Neoplatonic *Theologia Aristotelis* and *Liber de Causis*. Besides the doctrine, also the "style" of the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull* might have been appealing to Avicenna, in so far as it is a compendium of Aristotle's philosophical theology, rather than a running exegesis of Aristotle's text: in this way, it represents a type of writing more congenial to Avicenna's own understanding of the practice of philosophy and sense of liberty towards the previous philosophical tradition[25]. It cannot be excluded that Avicenna preferred the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull* over Alexander's commentary on *Metaphysics* Lambda because the Arabic translation of this latter was

---

not translated into Arabic and preserved in Greek (books A-Δ) might have influenced Avicenna's metaphysics indirectly, by means of its reception by later Greek commentators. Thus, Alexander's distinction between well-being and being, expressed, among other places, in his commentary on *Metaph.* A, 9, 992a24, and Δ, 5, 1015a20-26 (*Alexandri Aphrodisiensis In Aristotelis Metaphysica Commentaria*, ed. M. Hayduck, CAG I, Berlin, Reimer, 1891, p. 121, 19-20; p. 360, 19-28, p. 361, 11-13, 24-29), later adopted by the Neoplatonists, is the ultimate basis for Avicenna's distinction between essence and existence according to P. Wisnovsky, "Final and Efficient Causality in Avicenna's Cosmology and Theology", in *Quaestio*, 2 (2002), p. 97-123, p. 103 and n. 15. Likewise, Alexander's distinction between internal and external causes in his commentary on *Metaph.* Δ, 1, 1012b34 (*ibid.*, p. 345, 37-346, 16), further elaborated by the Neoplatonists, is the source of Avicenna's similar distinction according to R. Wisnovsky, "Towards a history of Avicenna's distinction between immanent and transcendent causes", in D. C. Reisman, *Before and After Avicenna*: *Proceedings of the Avicenna Study Group (1st : 2001, Yale University)*, Leiden, Brill, 2003, p. 49-68, p. 61 and n. 22. These two points are resumed in R. Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context*, Ithaca (New York), Cornell University Press, 2003. For traces of influence on Avicenna of other works of Alexander available, directly or indirectly, to the Arabic speakers of his time (Commentary on the *Topics*; *De anima*; *Quaestiones*; *De providentia*), see Bertolacci, *The Reception of Aristotle's* Metaphysics *in Avicenna's* Kitāb al-Šifāʾ, p. 446-447. The survey provided there should by no means be taken as exhaustive: see, for instance, the impact of Alexander's *Quaestio de differentia* on Avicenna's account of universals documented by S. Di Vincenzo (*Avicenna*, Book of the Healing, Isagoge ("Madḫal"). *Edition of the Arabic text, English Translation and Commentary*, Ph.D. thesis, Scuola Normale Superiore, École Pratique des Hautes Études, 2017-18).

24 This two-fold nature of the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull* is well evidenced in S. Fazzo, "L'exégèse du livre Lambda de la *Métaphysique* d'Aristote dans le *De Principiis* et la *Quaestio* I.1 d'Alexandre d'Aphrodise".

25 In the epilogue of the work, Alexander expresses a stylistic point ("<we should> not, on account of some slight doubts, aim at expanding our discourse and becoming long-winded, which would make the meaning obscure and conceal its elegance", Genequand, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on the Cosmos*, p. 124, 13-14) which squarely corresponds to the intention of conciseness expressed by Avicenna in the Prologue to the *Šifāʾ*.

incomplete[26], or because he disagreed with doctrines expounded therein[27], although this explanation looks less likely.

Three Quotations of Alexander in the *Ilāhiyyāt*

Text 1 contains the first three definite descriptions of Alexander in the *Ilāhiyyāt*; in them Avicenna surely intends to refer to his Greek predecessor (a fourth, less certain quotation, will be discussed in the fifth section):

> Text 1: Avicenna, *Ilāhiyyāt*, IX.2, in Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Šifāʾ, al-Ilāhiyyāt (2)*, ed. M. Y. Mūsā, S. Dunyā, S. Zāyid, al-Hayʾa al-ʿāmma li-šuʾūn al-maṭābiʿ al-amīriyya, Cairo 1960, p. 392.7-393.5 (Engl. transl. in Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of* The Healing, a parallel English-Arabic text translated, introduced, and annotated by M. E. Marmura, Provo (Utah), Brigham Young University Press, 2005, p. 317):

[a] Moreover, you know that the substance of this First Good that is loved is one. It is impossible that the first mover of the whole of heaven should be more than one, even though there is for each of the celestial spheres a proximate mover proper to it, and an object of desire and love (*mutašawwaq wa-maʿšūq*) proper to it, as the First Teacher [= Aristotle] and **those peripatetic scholars of attainment after him** [= Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius] see it. For they deny multiplicity only [in] the mover of all [things] and affirm multiplicity in the movers, both [those] separated [from matter] and [those] not separated, that specifically belong to each one of the celestial spheres. […] These, then, are of the view that the mover of the whole is one thing and that for each sphere after that there is a special mover.

[b] The First Teacher posits the number of spheres in accordance with [the knowledge] that appeared in his time, making the number of the separate principles follow their number.

[c] **One of his followers, who is more sound than** [**other followers**] **in what he says** [*asadd qawlan* = Alexander of Aphrodisias], declares and states in his treatise

---

26 Both al-Fārābī and Averroes complain about the incompleteness of Alexander's commentary on Λ; the part of it preserved in Averroes' Long Commentary on the *Metaphysics* arrives until the exegesis of Λ, 7, 1072b16.

27 Alexander of Aphrodisias might be among the "commentators" (*mufassirūna*) criticized by Avicenna in his exegesis of book Lambda in the *Kitāb al-Inṣāf* (*Book of the Fair Judgement*; see Avicenne. *Commentaire sur le livre Lambda de la Métaphysique d'Aristote*, ed. M. Geoffroy, J. Janssens, M. Sebti, Paris, Vrin, 2014, p. 49.47-51.80) with regard to their belief in the possibility of proving God's existence only on the basis of cosmic movement. In fact, Alexander upheld that, according to Aristotle, there is only a final cause of the movement of the heavens, not an efficient cause of their existence (this opinion is reported by Simplicius in the Commentary on the *Physics*, and was possibly known to Avicenna also through the lost treatise of Ammonius Son of Hermeias on God as crafter of the universe; see Avicenne. *Commentaire sur le livre Lambda de la Métaphysique d'Aristote*, p. 87-88, n. 8). Simplicius does not specify the work of Alexander where this opinion is expressed.

on the principles of the whole that the mover of the entire heaven is one, it being impossible for it to be numerically many, even though for each of the spheres there is a mover and an object of desire specifically its own [lit. "that are proper to it", *yaḫuṣṣānihā* (du.)].

[d] [Another of Aristotle's followers,] the one who expresses himself well regarding the First Teacher's books by way of summaries, even though he does not delve deeply into ideas [= Themistius], declares and states that whose meaning is as follows: "What is most likely and most true [to affirm] is the existence of a principle of motion belonging specifically to each celestial sphere as being in it, and the existence of a principle of motion belonging specifically to [each celestial sphere] as being an object of love separated [from matter]."

[e] **These two** [= Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius] **are the closest among the disciples of the First Teacher to being on the right path**.

These three quotations of Alexander in Text 1 are connected to one another within the same chapter of the *Ilāhiyyāt* (IX.2) and deal with the same topic (how many are the movers of the spheres). The issue is the one raised by book Lambda of the *Metaphysics*, i.e. the number of the heavenly movers (*Metaph.* Λ, 8, 1073a14-b1), but Avicenna's solution is much more congruent with Alexander's standpoint than with Aristotle's. Avicenna mentions Aristotle (the "First Teacher"), Alexander, and a third thinker that we can identify with Themistius together in section [a]; then each of them separately in sections [b], [c] and [d] respectively, and finally only Alexander and Themistius in section [e]. The mention of Aristotle in section [b] is related to another issue raised by the Stagirite in the same chapter of the *Metaphysics*, namely how many heavenly spheres are to be posited (*Metaph.* Λ, 8, 1073b1-1074a18). In its entirety, thus, Text 1 can be taken as a specimen of Avicenna's exegesis of a chapter of the *Metaphysics*. On the main issue discussed, Avicenna ascribes to Aristotle, Alexander, and Themistius basically the same position: namely that the heavenly motion is brought forth by three causes, the First Mover, i.e. the Unmoved Mover of the entire universe; a "proximate mover proper to" each heavenly sphere, namely its soul; and "an object of desire and love proper to" each sphere, namely its intellect. This doctrine, ascribed to the three together in section [a], is repeated in slightly different terms in the case of Alexander and Themistius in sections [c] and [d].

In general, these quotations reveal the high esteem that Avicenna has for both Alexander and the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull*. At the beginning of Text 1, Alexander, together with Themistius, is inserted among the "peripatetic scholars of attainment", namely those scholars capable of validating Aristotle's thought and of extracting from it its inner sense[28]. Likewise, at the end of the Text 1 both Alexander and Themistius are said to be the most faithful followers of the "right path" among Aristotle's disciples (an interesting expression, which implies Avicenna's awareness of deviations within

28 The Arabic expression translated by Marmura as "peripatetic scholars of attainment after him" is *man baʿdahū min muḥaṣṣilī ʿulamāʾ al-maššāʾīna*; Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, p. 328: "Validating Peripatetic scholars".

the school tradition stemming from Aristotle). However, Alexander is extolled by Avicenna higher than Themistius — a philosopher for whom Avicenna had nonetheless profound respect — since he is called "more sound in what he says" (*asadd qawlan*), an expression to which a more precise meaning can be possibly found, as we are going to see shortly. For the moment, it is important to notice that the elative "more sound" (*asadd*) is probably referred not generically to all other followers of Aristotle, as in Marmura's translation, but in all likelihood specifically to the sole Themistius. Moreover, the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull* by Alexander is the only work explicitly mentioned in this passage, whereas the identity of the work of Aristotle referred to is implicit and that of Themistius is left unspecified.

How do we know that we are presented with Alexander and Themistius in our Text 1? The identity of Aristotle in Text 1 is clear enough, since the formula "First Teacher" cannot apply but to him. The descriptions of Alexander and Themistius, on the other hand, are more vague and could apply in principle also to other scholars of the Peripatetic tradition. The parallel passage of Text 1 that occurs verbatim in an earlier work of Avicenna, the *Book of Provenance and Destination* (*Kitāb al-Mabdaʾ wa-l-Maʿād*), is very helpful in this regard[29]. Here Aristotle is called "the Philosopher" and Alexander and Themistius are called by means of their Arabic proper names[30].

With respect to previous scholarship, I wish to pinpoint the following data, relevant to the present purposes. First, the identity of the follower of Aristotle in Text 1 [c] with Alexander of Aphrodisias is assessed by explanatory notes in manuscripts of the *Ilāhiyyāt*, of the *Book of Salvation* (*Kitāb al-Naǧāt*) — a work of Avicenna later than the *Ilāhiyyāt*, in which the content of Text 1 is duplicated — and of the *Clarification*

---

29 Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, p. 328-329.

30 This parallel passage has been thoroughly analyzed by Dimitri Gutas (*Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, p. 326-330), in whose account all the relevant information can be found. Avicenna's progressive independence from the authors of the philosophical tradition and their authority which Gutas infers from the transition from Avicenna's use of proper names in the *Book of Provenance and Destination* to his employment of definite descriptions in the *Ilāhiyyāt* and the *Book of Salvation* should not disregard the various mentions of Aristotle that occur by means of this latter's proper name, together with an extolling praise of him, in Avicenna's summa *Philosophy for ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla* (*Dānešnāme-ye ʿAlāʾī*), apparently written after the *Ilāhiyyāt* and the *Book of Salvation* (I have taken into account this quotation in "Commenting on Aristotle Outside A Commentary: On Avicenna's Exegesis of the Arabic (and Persian?) Translations of the *Metaphysics* in some of His *summae*", communication presented at the workshop *Philosophy and Translation in the Islamic World*, Zurich, 21-22 June 2018, org. U. Rudolph, R. Wisnovsky). These "anachronistic" mentions of Aristotle's proper name might point to specificities of the *Philosophy for ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla*, or be related to Avicenna's reuse of previous textual material (including proper names of scholars, left unmodified) in later works. The astronomical section of the *Book of the Cure*, for example, contains numerous nominal quotations of the main authority on the subject (Ptolemy) with respect to the much less frequent and more oblique references to Aristotle in the metaphysical section: the astronomy of *The Cure*, together with the rest of mathematics, was composed earlier, and was later joined with the other parts of the work, according to Avicenna's biographer al-Ǧūzǧānī (see Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, p. 33). In the communication quoted above, I have tried to argue that the detailed paraphrase of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Alpha Elatton chapter 2 that Avicenna presents in chapters VIII.1-3 of *The Cure*, might derive from his previous exegesis of Aristotle's work. This is the passage of *The Cure* in which most of the references to Aristotle ("First Teacher") and the only mention of the title of his *Metaphysics* ("First Teaching") occur.

of the Truth with the Guarantee of the Veracity (*Bayān al-ḥaqq bi-ḍamān al-ṣidq*) of the second generation student of Avicenna Abū l-ʿAbbās Faḍl Ibn Muḥammad al-Lawkarī (V-VI/XI-XII c.), in which Text 1 is also quoted[31]. Second, both in Text 1 and in its parallel passage in the *Book of Provenance and Destination,* the expression designating Alexander's treatise (*risālatuhū llatī fī mabādiʾ al-kull*) might be a definite description of the work (as Marmura understands it), rather than the mention of its title[32]. Third, and more importantly, in the expression *asadd qawlan* — commonly translated in the sense of "sounder in speech", as both Marmura and Gutas do in different ways[33] — the term *qawl* lends itself also to a different interpretation. In fact, in Avicenna's vocabulary in the *Ilāhiyyāt* and elsewhere, on the footsteps of the Arabic translations of Greek philosophical texts, *qawl* stands for the Greek λόγος, as, for example, in the following passage:

> Text 2.1: Avicenna, *Ilāhiyyāt*, VIII.7, ed. Cairo, p. 367.18 (Engl. transl. in Avicenna, *The Metaphysics of* The Healing), *verbatim* reproduced in Ibn Sinā, *Al-Naǧāt min al-ġarq fī baḥr al-ḍalālāt*, ed. M. T. Dānišpazūh, Tehran, Dānišgah Tehran, 1985, p. 602.11:
>
> And if he says of Him "one," he would mean only this existence itself, where either quantitative and categorical division (*al-qisma bi-l-kamm aw al-qawl*; Lat.: *divisio per quantitatem vel per dictionem*, p. 430.29) are negated of Him or else a companion is negated of Him.

What lurks in the background of Avicenna's expression translated by Marmura here as "quantitative and categorical division" are Aristotelian passages like the following:

> Text 2.2: Arist., *Metaph.* Δ, 6, 1016b3-6: ὅλως δὲ ὧν ἡ νόησις ἀδιαίρετος ἡ νοοῦσα τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι, καὶ μὴ δύναται χωρίσαι μήτε χρόνῳ μήτε τόπῳ μήτε λόγῳ, μάλιστα ταῦτα ἕν, καὶ τούτων ὅσα οὐσίαι.

in which the Greek term λόγος corresponds to *qawl* in the only extant Arabic translation[34]. Other occurrences of *qawl* in the meaning of the Greek term λόγος are not unusual in

---

31 Ms. Iran, Tehran, Kitābḫānah Maǧlis Šūrā Islāmī, 10198, for example, reports below the line: هو الاسكندر الافريدوسي, *huwa l-Iskandar al-Afrīdūsī*, "He is Alexander of Aphrodisias" (for further information on this and other manuscripts of the *Ilāhiyyāt*, see www.avicennaproject.eu, website of the ERC Advanced Grant Project "Philosophy on the Border of Civilizations and Intellectual Endeavours: Towards a Critical Edition of the Metaphysics (Ilahiyyat of Kitab al- Shifaʾ) of Avicenna (Ibn Sina)"). See Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Naǧāt min al-ġarq fī baḥr al-ḍalālāt*, ed. M. T. Dānišpazūh, Tehran, Dānišgah Tehran, 1985, p. 635, n. 5, and Al-Lawkarī, *Bayān al-ḥaqq bi-ḍamān al-ṣidq: al-Qism al-ilāhī*, ed. I. Dībāǧī, Tehran 1995, p. 355.4.

32 Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, p. 328, translates in both cases "in his treatise *On the Principles of the Universe*". Also for C. Genequand at stake is the title of the epistle (Alexandre d'Aphrodise, *Les principes du tout selon la doctrine d'Aristote*, p. 45).

33 "One of his followers, who is more sound than [other followers] in what he says" (Marmura); "One of his [i.e. Aristotle's] followers who speaks more to the point" (Gutas). The expression is translated "l'un des plus fiables parmi ceux de son école", in Alexandre d'Aphrodise, *Les principes du tout selon la doctrine d'Aristote*, p. 45.

34 See Averroes. *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 536.8-11; cf. *ibid.*, vol. 3, p. (262).

Avicenna's works[35]. This being the case, the expression *al-qisma bi-l-kamm aw al-qawl* in Text 2.1 can be more aptly translated as "quantitative and logical division", in which the former is a division in reality, the latter a division only in the mind.

As a consequence, Alexander might be characterized by Avicenna in Text 1, rather than as a follower of Aristotle who is *asadd qawlan* in the sense of "sounder in speech", as a follower of him who is *asadd qawlan* in the sense of "sounder in reasoning". Such an interpretation looks preferable, since it provides a neater contrast between Alexander and Themistius in Text 1: according to this interpretation, Alexander would be described by Avicenna as a more perspicacious follower of Aristotle, whereas Themistius would appear as a disciple of the First Master capable of expressing nicely the content of Aristotle's works, without being able, however, to penetrate deeply into the doctrines expressed therein[36].

The Cosmological Noetics of the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull*

About the issue of how many are the causes of cosmic motion, in Text 1 Avicenna provides a neat "pluralistic" interpretation of a passage of Alexander's *Fī Mabādiʾ*

35 See *Al-Naǧāt min al-ġarq fī baḥr al-ḍalālāt*, p. 551.14, p. 553.7 (cf. A.-M. Goichon, *Lexique de la langue philosophique d'Ibn Sīnā*, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1938, p. 320). In Avicenne. *Commentaire sur le livre Lambda de la Métaphysique d'Aristote*, p. 47.45, the term *qawl* in the expression *al-qawl wa-l-istidlāl al-ʿaqlī* corresponds to λόγος, as in Usṭāṭ's translation of *Metaph*. 1072a22 on which Avicenna is commenting (see *ibid*., p. 87, n. 5). A similar Arabic term by means of which Avicenna expresses the Greek idea of λόγος is *kalima* (lit.: "word"), which occurs at least once in the *Ilāhiyyāt*, if we read *kalima* in I.7, p. 47.6, as *lectio difficilior* with respect to *kulliyya* in the Cairo edition (see Bertolacci, *The Reception of Aristotle's* Metaphysics *in Avicenna's* Kitāb al-Šifāʾ, p. 495, and the new critical edition of Avicenna's work in www.avicennaproject.eu).

36 A passage of Avicenna's *Naǧāt* (*Al-Naǧāt min al-ġarq fī baḥr al-ḍalālāt*, p. 40.10-11), translated as follows in *Avicenna's Deliverance: Logic*, translation and notes by A. Q. Ahmed, Karachi, Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 33: "As for the proponents of the second opinion — and among them are Alexander [of Aphrodisias] and many of the later scholars who verified [knowledge] (among whom he [= Alexander] is the most probative, *ašadduhum taḥṣīlan*) — well they think that etc.", opens the possibility of reading the expression *asadd qawlan* in Text 1 ("sounder in reasoning") as *ašadd qawlan* ("stronger in reasoning", i.e. "more intelligent"). As in any other case of a difference given by the bare punctuation of letters, the issue is very tricky and almost insolvable. Of the 16 manuscripts employed in the new critical edition of Avicenna's *Ilāhiyyāt* (see previous footnote), five (K, R, P, S, Si) report *ašadd*, four (U, Cǧ, Q, Qn) *asadd*, one (Er) presents an uncertain reading, whereas the remaining six (J, N, O, Pa, Pb, T) do not contain the passage in question. The Latin translation translates the term (*firmius*) in accordance with other translations of the root *s-d-d* elsewhere. The edition of the work of al-Lawkarī mentioned above prints اشد (p. 355.4), but reports اشد also in the apparatus criticus, as a reading supported by mss ث and س : this probably means that the intended reading is اسد and that the variant reading اشد is supported by two witnesses. The term *asadd* is *lectio difficilior*, a fact attested by the scantier occurrences of terms stemming from this root in the *Ilāhiyyāt*, with respect to the more frequent root *š-d-d*. Conversely, the reading *asadd* might be derivative with respect to a hypothetical original *ašadd* in force of the incorrect understanding of *qawl* as "speech" rather than "reason" in the immediately following word: early scribes of Avicenna's work, understanding *qawl* as "speech", might have found the phrase "sounder in speech" more sensible than the phrase "stronger in speech".

al-kull regarding the number of separate movers of the heavenly spheres. According to Avicenna, Alexander holds that each sphere has, beside a soul as internal principle of motion, two separate movers that act as final causes, namely the First Mover, common to all the spheres and to the entire universe, and the sphere's specific unmoved mover, i.e. an intellect which belongs exclusively to that particular sphere[37]. Avicenna ascribes this same position to Aristotle and Themistius.

The doctrine that Avicenna ascribes jointly to Aristotle, Alexander, and Themistius in Text 1 can be found, in these precise terms, neither in Aristotle nor in Themistius. In fact, it comes from a passage of the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull* by Alexander, which Avicenna reports in Text 1 [c]. The passage in question reads as follows in the current critical edition:

> Text 3.1: C. Genequand, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on the Cosmos*, Leiden-Boston-Köln, Brill, 2001, p. 86.16-88.2 (§86):
>
> But to assume a plurality of movers for the divine body, even though we may admit that each one of the spheres has a mover and a desiring element (متشوق *mutašawwiq*, lit. "desiring thing") proper to it (*yaḫuṣṣānihu* [du.]), is probably not a correct proposition[38].

This, instead, is the same passage of the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull* in the way in which Avicenna probably understood it:

> Text 3.2: C. Genequand, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on the Cosmos*, Leiden-Boston-Köln, Brill 2001, p. 86.16-88.2 (§86), modified:
>
> But to assume a plurality of movers for the divine body, even though we may admit that each one of the spheres has a mover and a desired thing (متشوق *mutašawwaq*) proper to it (*yaḫuṣṣānihu* [du.]), is probably not a correct proposition.

Both Text 3.1 and Text 3.2 maintain that the mover of the divine body, i.e. of the entire heavenly region, is one (namely the Unmoved Mover), although it can be admitted that each celestial sphere has additional movers: these additional movers are one in the case of Text 3.1 (a mover which is both moving and desiring), two in the case of Text 3.2 (a mover moving and a mover desired). The passage in question is substantially the same in both cases: only a certain vocalization added by the editor to the term متشوق distinguishes the former from the latter and implies a different number of movers for each sphere in the two cases.

In the critical edition of the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull*, the vocalization chosen for the crucial term is "desiring" (*mutašawwiq*) in the active. By reading the term in question in the active and considering the two terms "moving" and "desiring" as an hendiadys,

---

37 D. Janos, "Moving the Orbs: Astronomy, Physics, and Metaphysics, and the Problem of Celestial Motion According to Ibn Sīnā", in *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 21 (2011), p. 165-214, esp. p. 182 and n. 53.

38 Cf. Alexandre d'Aphrodise, *Les principes du tout selon la doctrine d'Aristote*, p. 76 (§86): "Il n'est vraisemblablement pas correct d'admettre une pluralité de moteurs pour le corps divin, même si nous reconnaissons que chacun des sphères possède un moteur et un principe de désir qui lui sont propres".

the result is obtained of limiting to one the causes of the heavenly motion that are specific to each of the spheres: according to this reading, one and the same thing (namely the heavenly soul of the sphere, identical with its heavenly intellect) would be both moving and desiring, i.e. moving the sphere to which it belongs in as much as it desires the First Mover of the universe. In this case, however, it becomes difficult to explain the dual form of the following verb "(that are) proper to it" (*yaḫuṣṣānihu*), which — strictly speaking — presupposes two things being proper to each heavenly sphere rather than one, although the editor can invoke another passage of the work in which a loose employment of a dual form of a personal pronoun occurs[39].

Avicenna, by contrast, shows himself to understand the term at stake in the passive (*mutašawwaq*), in the sense of "desired thing". This is attested by the hendiadys "an object of desire and love (*mutašawwaq wa-maʿšūq*)" occurring in Text 1 [a], i.e. in Avicenna's first account of the common position that he ascribes to Aristotle, Alexander, and Themistius, with reference to the same mover at stake in Text 1 [c]: the term "object of love" (*maʿšūq*), morphologically in the passive, implies that also the preceding term "object of desire" is meant by Avicenna in the passive (as *mutašawwaq*). This being the case, on the footsteps of Text 3.2, in Text 1 [c] Avicenna speaks of two distinct causes of motion specific to each heavenly sphere: the "mover" (*muḥarrik*), namely the soul of the sphere, and the object of desire of, or the thing desired by (*mutašawwaq*), the sphere, namely its proper intellect. The dual form of the verb in the expression "that are proper to it" (*yaḫuṣṣānihā*, "specifically its own" in Marmura's translation) is congruent with the duality of the movers involved.

Some considerations are in order. To start with, it is worth noting that in Text 1 Avicenna selects Alexander's position as the key to understand the topic, and sheds backward on Aristotle and forward on Themistius the pluralistic interpretation that he finds in Alexander and that he endorses as his own. Significantly, the position that Avicenna ascribes jointly to Aristotle, Alexander, and Themistius in Text 1 [a] is phrased similarly to the position attributed to the sole Alexander in section [c]. Moreover, Avicenna himself holds a pluralistic interpretation of the issue of cosmic motion both at the end of the same chapter in which our text occurs[40], and in the two immediately following chapters[41]. There is therefore plain consensus between Alexander *apud Avicennam* and Avicenna himself on this point[42]. In other words, Avicenna appeals to Alexander as the central authority of ancient philosophy, together with Aristotle and Themistius, that may be invoked in support of his own position. Finally, and most importantly, Avicenna's interpretation goes against the "monistic" interpretation of Alexander's cosmological noetics as expressed in his Greek works, according to which the distinct intellectual souls of the spheres desire only the First

39 Genequand, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on the Cosmos*, p. 112.8 (§128). Cf. Alexandre d'Aphrodise, *Les principes du tout selon la doctrine d'Aristote*, p. 128.

40 *Ilāhiyyāt*, IX.2, p. 393.7-8.

41 *Ilāhiyyāt*, IX.3, p. 400.18-401.9 (a passage in which Text 1 is explicitly recalled, at p. 401.1-2); IX.4, p. 408.15-16.

42 In a previous section of chapter IX.2 (see p. 389.12-13; 390.5), Avicenna endorses a further motive of Alexander's celestial noetics, and contends that the heavenly souls perform acts of intellection (being therefore intellectual souls).

Mover as separate principle, that finds illustrious advocates among contemporary interpreters of Alexander[43], although this scholarly trend conflicts with an equally authoritative pluralistic interpretation of Alexander's positions[44].

In front of this evidence, the question arises: does Avicenna interpret and report faithfully the text of the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull* that he is quoting, or is he misunderstanding or even intentionally misreporting it, in order to strengthen his own position, running the risk of jeopardizing in this way the congruence and compatibility of the Arabic Alexander with the Greek Alexander? In what follows, I wish to defend Avicenna as a legitimate interpreter of the Arabic Alexander[45]. In fact, a climax of statements going in the opposite direction can be found in the recent French translation, with facing Arabic text, of the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull*: in it, first, "certain Arabic philosophers" are said to go against Alexander in keeping celestial souls and celestial proper intellects distinct from one another; then, Avicenna is portrayed as bringing Alexander, consciously or not, towards his own positions; finally, Avicenna is charged with an intentional deformation of Alexander's text[46].

Contrary to this position, I wish to maintain that Avicenna in Text 1 [c] understands the relevant passage of the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull* in a fully plausible way. First of all, his way of quoting the passage at stake of the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull* comes very close to a *verbatim* citation, with an effort of literalness which is quite unusual to him with respect to any other locus of the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull*, as we are going to see in the following section[47]. In other words, Avicenna does not look to be tampering in any

---

43 I. Bodnár, "Alexander of Aphrodisias on celestial motions", in *Phronesis*, 17/2 (1997), p. 190-205; R. Sorabji, *The Philosophy of the Commentators 200-600 AD. A Sourcebook*, Duckworth, London 2004, vol. 2, p. 340-342.

44 See, for instance, R. W. Sharples, "Alexander of Aphrodisias on divine providence: Two problems", in *Classical quarterly*, 32 (1982), p. 198-211, p. 199, n. 15, and 208-10 (Appendix); D. Twetten, "Aristotelian Cosmology and Causality in Classical Arabic Philosophy and Its Greek Background", in D. Janos (ed.), *Ideas in Motion in Baghdad and Beyond: Philosophical and Theological Exchanges between Christians and Muslims in the Third/Ninth and Fourth/Tenth Centuries*, Leiden, Brill, 2016, p. 312-433, p. 321, n. 23.

45 A similar issue of reliability applies to Avicenna's "pluralistic" interpretation of Themistius' cosmic motion in Text 1. Avicenna could consult Themistius' commentary on *Metaph*. Λ, 8, but no statement presently known of this commentary corresponds squarely to the position that Avicenna ascribes to him in our passage. The issue of whether Avicenna could find evidence of this topic in Themistius' other commentaries on Aristotle, like the commentary on the *De Caelo*, should be addressed in future research.

46 "Les corps célestes ne possédant que la partie intellective de l'âme, les deux notions, âme et intellect, ont … la même extension pur Alexandre, et il ne faudrait pas les prendre pour deux instances distinctes comme le feront certain philosophes arabes"; "D'après lui [Avicenne], tous les péripateticiennes, Alexandre et Themistius inclus, défendent la position selon laquelle chaque sphère … possède un moteur interne et un moteur séparé et désiré qui lui est propre. Comme on l'a vu, il ne semble pas que ce soit la position d'Alexandre, mais c'est celle d'Avicenne et il lui aura sans doute, sciemment ou non, annexé le plus illustre des commentateurs"; "… mais l'interpretation de ce dernier [Avicenne] est sans doute tendancieuse", Alexandre d'Aphrodise, *Les principes du tout selon la doctrine d'Aristote*, p. 23; 45; 128.

47 Text 3.2: *wa-in kunnā qad naʿtarifu bi-anna li-kulli wāḥidin min al-ukarin muḥarrikan wa-mutašawwaqan yaḫuṣṣānihū*; Text 1 [c]: *wa-in kāna li-kulli kuratin muḥarrikun wa-mutašawwaqun yaḫuṣṣānihā* (Cairo ed., p. 393.1-2); (*yaqūlu inna …*) *wa-inna li-kulli kuratin muḥarrikan wa-mutašawwaqan yaḫuṣṣānihū* (ms. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Pococke 125, siglum P in www.avicennaproject.eu). One of the differences between

way with this text, but to be reporting it almost *ad litteram*, as scholars acknowledge[48]. Tendentiousness in this case, I believe, is excluded at the root by the very nature of Avicenna's quotation technique. Secondly, a monistic interpretation of Alexander is perfectly compatible with the reading "desired" in the passive as in Text 3.2, and does not necessarily require the active reading "desiring" as in Text 3.1: in a monistic perspective, Alexander in our passage might be alluding to one and the same thing, namely the heavenly intellect of the sphere in its function of both mover and object of desire, i.e. of mover of the sphere in so far as is desired by it. In fact, the joint occurrence of the terms "mover" and "desired" can be found also shortly after Text 3 in the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull*[49]. Finally, nowhere in the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull* Alexander openly affirms that there is only one unmoved mover in the universe or, conversely, does he exclude that the celestial spheres may have specific unmoved movers[50], and scholars of Alexander, as recalled above, still debate whether he was a monist or a pluralist. Rather than going against Alexander, or bringing this latter towards his own positions, Avicenna might be correctly reporting and keenly understanding Alexander's text.

Waiting from scholars of Alexander a further clarification, and hopefully a final assessment, of his precise standpoint, whether monistic or pluralistic, on cosmological noetics, the way Avicenna reads and interprets the relevant passage of the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull* in Text 3.2 looks to me perfectly natural and in no way biased. If Avicenna's interpretation of this crucial passage of the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull* should also prove to be historically tenable, future research is faced with the question of whether the Arabic Alexander reported by Avicenna, holder of a pluralistic view of cosmic motion, is in any way compatible with the Greek Alexander of the original texts of the *Mantissa* and the *Quaestiones*, in case this latter should really have advocated a monistic standpoint[51]. Text 3 falls exactly at the beginning of the second, possibly spurious, part of the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull*, and a perfect congruence between this text and the position expressed by Alexander in his Greek works is not required. If the two Alexanders shall result to be mutually incompatible, scholars are called to investigate more closely the identity of those "Avicennists" *avant la lettre* who fabricated Text 3, together with the entire second part of the *Fī Mabādiʾ*

Text 1 [c] according to the Cairo edition and Text 3.2 — i.e. the different personal pronoun attached to the dual verb (feminine in Avicenna, in relation to the heavenly spheres, masculine in the edition of the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull*, in relation to each one of them) — vanishes if we read text 1 [c] according to ms. P.

48 "Le texte suivi ici est celui de la citation d'Avicenne", Alexandre d'Aphrodise, *Les principes du tout selon la doctrine d'Aristote*, p. 23; 45; 128.

49 Genequand, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on the Cosmos*, §91. I am indebted to Matteo Di Giovanni for having brought this point to my attention.

50 "Le passage où l'on attendrait un exposé plus systématique de la question (§86-96) reste allusive, lacunaire et désordonné", Alexandre d'Aphrodise, *Les principes du tout selon la doctrine d'Aristote*, p. 31; "le texte de ce paragraphe est très incertain", p. 128.

51 An easy way out of the contrast would be to assume an evolution, i.e. to assume that the pluralistic position expressed in Text 3 may be a more definite expression or a later development of the monistic standpoint originally held by Alexander.

al-kull, and initiated a novel approach to Alexander's cosmological noetics in the history of philosophy[52].

A Fourth Quotation of Alexander: "The Excellent among the Earlier Scholars"

A fourth quotation of an author traditionally identified with Alexander of Aphrodisias occurs at the beginning of the chapter of the *Ilāhiyyāt* (IX.3) that immediately follows the one containing Text 1. At stake this time is the doctrine of the final cause of the heavenly movement, with implications for the issue of providence (i.e. whether the movements of the spheres are for the sake of the sublunary world). This quotation has received less attention in recent scholarship than the previous one, but is equally interesting.

The quotation is encapsulated within Avicenna's report of the opinion of a group of people ("some people", *qawm*) who found themselves confronted with an apparent contradiction between the statement of "the excellent among the earlier [scholars]" (*fāḍil al-mutaqaddimīna*), who contends that the difference in motions and directions of the heavenly bodies has providential purposes to the benefit of the sublunary world (section [a]), and an alternative position, whose source is not stated but which is said to be supported by syllogistic reasoning, according to which the motion of the heavenly bodies cannot be for the sake of anything else (section [b]). In front of this opposition of mutually exclusive, albeit authoritative, stand-points, this group of people resorted to a conciliatory approach, maintaining that the heavenly movement itself is not for the sake of anything else, whereas the different directions and speeds which it assumes in its various instances are for the sake of something else, i.e. the good order of the sublunary world (section [c]).

Text 4: Avicenna, *Ilāhiyyāt*, IX.3, ed. Cairo 1960, p. 393.16-394.6 (transl. M. Marmura, modified):

[a] Some people (*qawm*) — on hearing the outward meaning of the statement of **the excellent among the earlier** [**scholars**] (*fāḍil al-mutaqaddimīna*)[53] when he says that the difference (*iḫtilāf*) in these motions and their directions seem to be

52 Genequand tentatively ascribes the composition of the second part of the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull* to its Arabic translators (Alexandre d'Aphrodise, *Les principes du tout selon la doctrine d'Aristote*, p. 127), namely either Isḥāq Ibn Ḥunayn (d. 910 or 911) or Ibrāhīm Ibn ʿAbd Allāh (*ibid.*, p. 15). The issue is very important for our understanding of the development of the history of *falsafa*, since these supposed fabricators would ascribe to Alexander a doctrine of triadic pluralism (First Mover, proper intellects, proper souls) which is not contemplated in al-Fārābī's cosmology — in which the emanative scheme is pluralistic (First Mover plus proper intellects), but not triadic, since the proper souls are not taken into account — and anticipates the position later notoriously advocated by Avicenna on the authority of Alexander. In other words, neither al-Fārābī nor Avicenna, but rather the supposed fabricators, would be the first proponents of this doctrine. On this basis we could tentatively date the supposed fabrication between al-Fārābī's death (951CE) and the beginning of Avicenna's activity.

53 This expression is translated as "best of the Ancients" by Marmura.

> due to the providence (*ʿināya*) for the generable and corruptible things under the sphere of the Moon, [b] having also previously heard and known through syllogistic reasoning that the motion of the celestial things cannot be for the sake of anything other than themselves and cannot be for the sake of their effects — [c] they sought to reconcile these two doctrines saying 'The motion itself is not for the sake of what is under the sphere of the Moon, but is due to the imitation of the Pure Good and the desire for Him. As for the difference in motions, this happens so that what results from each one of them in the world of generation and corruption may differ[54] in a manner through which the perpetuity of the species falls into order'.

The remainder of chapter IX.3 is devoted by Avicenna to an example illustrating the compromise solution reached by this group of people (p. 294.6-11), and to a lengthy and articulated refutation of its underpinnings.

A gloss in the lithograph of the *Ilāhiyyāt* printed in Tehran in 1885, which identifies "the excellent among the earlier [scholars]" with Alexander, has originated a sort of scholarly consensus — carried on by the Cairo printed version of 1960, the edition of the Latin translation of 1980, and the French translation of 1985, as well as by subsequent editions, translations, and studies — which results in a sort of *communis opinio*[55]. Also in this case we can be sure to be in front of Alexander of Aphrodisias, since Avicenna identifies the author in question with Alexander in another passage of the *Kitāb al-Mabdaʾ wa-l-maʿād* (beginning of chapter I.46), as in Text 1. However, the expression that Avicenna uses to designate the author in question ("the excellent among the earlier [scholars]") makes the identification of him with Alexander problematic, in so far as it is both different from the expression used to designate Alexander in Text 1, and excessively praising, if taken at face value, to be suitable for Alexander, in force of the role of supreme philosophical authority that Avicenna constantly ascribes to Aristotle (First Teacher) in Text 1 and throughout the *Ilāhiyyāt*, as well as in his

---

54 Reading *fa-li-yaḫtalifa*, instead of *fa-li-ḫtilāf* in the Cairo edition, as suggested in Bertolacci, *The Reception of Aristotle's* Metaphysics *in Avicenna's* Kitāb al-Šifāʾ, p. 545.

55 See *Al-Ilāhiyyāt min al-Šifāʾ li-Šayḫ al-Raʾīs Abū [sic] ʿAlī Ḥusayn Ibn ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Sīnā maʿa taʿlīqāt*, ed. ʿA. al-K. al-Šarīf al-Šīrāzī, Tehran, Madrasa Dār al-Funūn, 1303Hš/1885, vol. 1, p. 266-567, p. 522 (*huwa Iskandar*, interlinear addition between lines 8-9); Ibn Sīnā. *Al-Šifāʾ, al-Ilāhiyyāt (2)*, p. 393, app. ad lin. 17; Avicenne, *La Métaphysique du Shifāʾ. Livres de VI à X*, traduction, notes et commentaires par G. C. Anawati, Paris, Vrin, 1985, p. 226 (note mentioning the ed. Cairo, p. 393.16 [in fact 393.17] and the Tehran lithograph); Avicenna Latinus. *Liber de Philosophia prima sive Scientia divina, V-X*, édition critique par S. Van Riet, introduction par G. Verbeke, Peeters-Brill, Louvain-Leiden 1980, p. 464, n. 92-93 (with reference to the aforementioned place of the apparatus of the Cairo ed.). Cf. Ibn Sīnā. *Al-Ilāhiyyāt min Kitāb Al-Šifāʾ*, ed. Ḥ. al-Āmulī, Qum, Maktab al-Iʿlām al-Islāmī, Markaz al-Našr, 1418Hq, 1376Hš [= 1997-8], p. 422, n. 1; Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā), *Metafisica. La* Scienza delle cose divine (al-Ilāhiyyāt) *dal* Libro della Guarigione (Kitāb Al-Šifāʾ), a cura di O. Lizzini, P. Porro, Milano, Bompiani, 2002, 2006², p. 1237, n. 117 (the English translation by M. E. Marmura does not discuss the identity of the quoted author). I have myself adhered to this line of interpretation in *The Reception of Aristotle's* Metaphysics *in Avicenna's* Kitāb al-Šifāʾ, p. 444, and Avicenna, *Libro della Guarigione, Le Cose Divine*, a cura di A. Bertolacci, Torino, UTET (Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese), 2007, p. 721, n. 107.

other writings. On the assumption that Avicenna is referring here to Alexander, the problem posed by the ascription of excellence to the author at stake is made even more acute by the fact that this author is quoted (and regarded as excellent) alone.

Several arguments can be advanced in defense of the traditional identification of "the excellent among the earlier [scholars]" with Alexander. To start with, the origin of this traditional line of interpretation can be placed much earlier than 1885, since the identification with Alexander is found already in one of the earliest manuscripts of the *Ilāhiyyāt*, copied in 561 or 571H[56]. The pedigree of the ascription, therefore, starts several centuries earlier than is usually believed. Moreover, from the doctrinal point of view, the identification of "the excellent among the earlier [scholars]" with Alexander is reasonable, since this fourth quotation fits with the previous three in a coherent theoretical framework, in so far as the same topic of the heavenly motion is examined *ex parte ante*, with respect to its causes, in the first three quotations in Text 1, and *ex parte post*, with regard to its effects, in the fourth quotation in Text 4. Moreover, the tension that Text 4 establishes between the author's contention in section [a] that the heavenly motion is for the sake of the sublunary world, and the contrasting position in section [b] according to which this motion is only for the sake of itself, aptly mirrors the novelty of Alexander's position on the issue of providence with respect to previous Peripatetics, who upheld that providence is limited to the heavenly world and does not regard, except accidentally, the sublunary sphere[57]. Finally, the doctrine that Avicenna ascribes to the author quoted in Text 4 finds precise resonances in the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull*, although Avicenna's quotation is not a mirror image of Alexander's text, as it is Text 1, but corresponds to the usual quotation technique that Avicenna adopts in the *Ilāhiyyāt*, resulting in a sort of interpretative summary of different passages of the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull*[58].

---

56 See the already mentioned ms Oxford, Bodleian Library, Pococke 125 (siglum P in www.avicennaproject.eu), f. 357r: "Alexander the excellent among the earlier [scholars]". The same identification with Alexander occurs in one of the manuscripts that convey the *locus parallelus* of this passage in the *Al-Naǧāt min al-ġarq fī baḥr al-ḍalālāt*, p. 636, n. 8.

57 See on this, S. Fazzo, "La dottrina della provvidenza in Alessandro d'Afrodisia", in Alessandro d'Afrodisia, *La Provvidenza. Questioni sulla Provvidenza*, a cura di S. Fazzo, M. Zonta, Milano, BUR, 1998, esp. p. 24. The example that the "some people" give of providence, as they conceive it, in the part of chapter IX.3 that follows immediately Text 4 implies an agent that strives for two purposes, a main one and a secondary one: this means that the intentional exercise of providence also on the sublunary world (the agent's secondary purpose in the example) is the innovation that Alexander brings forth within a debate in which a providential action in the supralunary world (the agent's main purpose) is taken for granted.

58 The main passage is Genequand, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on the Cosmos*, p. 90.11-15, §91: "Alexander says: if the mover, in so far as it is desired, is one, the whole divine body moving with a circular, continuous and regular motion does not move only according to these things [French translations, p. 78: "avec ces choses"]. The cause of this must be providence (*ʿināya*) for the things which are below the sphere of the moon through their choice (*iḫtiyār*) and disposition for this". In this passage, the precise identity of "these things" and the reference of "their" in "their choice" remains obscure. The notion of choice (*iḫtiyār*) is widely discussed in a passage of the beginning of the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull*, where it is ascribed to the heavenly souls, p. 48.8-50.2: "But the souls of the divine things do not share in any of the less perfect faculties … It follows from what we have said that the desire which is in these is by will (*iḫtiyār*, lit. "choice") and the

Assuming that Avicenna is referring to Alexander also in this case, the formula "the excellent among the earlier [scholars]" is less problematic than it could *prima facie* seem. First of all, the ascription of excellence to Alexander is not new under Avicenna's pen, since it occurs in other parts of the *Šifāʾ* as well, although in a qualified way, i.e. with reference to the ancient commentators[59]. Second, in at least one case in the *Šifāʾ* Avicenna calls Aristotle "excellent First Teacher", so that excellence is not exclusively attributed by him to Alexander[60]. Third, Tony Street has convincingly shown that a full series of references to al-Fārābī in the logic part of the *Šifāʾ* entails the mention of this latter's excellence among later philosophers, and, in at least one case, the formula that Avicenna uses to designate al-Fārābī, i.e. "the excellent among the later [scholars]" (*fāḍil al-mutaʾaḫḫirīna*, "eminent later scholar" in Street's translation), can be taken as the exact counterpart of the expression employed for Alexander in Text 4[61]. In other words, we are in front of three kinds of excellence that Avicenna ascribes to three interrelated thinkers, in a tripartite division of the history of Peripatetic philosophy in which earlier and later scholars mark two interrelated articulations of post-Aristotelian thought: the first and original type of excellence is reserved, as it should, to Aristotle; the second type of excellence is that pertaining to Alexander among the earlier Peripatetics, according to our interpretation of Text 4; the third one is accorded to the author that Avicenna regards as comparable to Alexander for his importance in the later history of Aristotelianism, i.e. al-Fārābī.

---

true and excellent will (*iḫtiyār*) is the love of the good". The idea of the difference in heavenly motions follows shortly the first passage, *ibid.*, p. 94.1-3, §94: "the diversity (*iḫtilāf*) existing between the spheres with regard to the slowness and velocity of their circular motion is due to the diversity of their moving causes". From these three passages, we can surmise that, according to Alexander, providence for earthly things (first passage) is intentionally exerted by the heavenly souls (second passage), in their function of movers of the heavenly spheres (third passage). On the other hand, the idea of the "difference in direction" recalled by Avicenna in his report of "the excellent among the earlier [scholars]" in Text 4 is not easily found in the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull* (as it is neither in the *De providentia*, nor in Simplicius' report of Alexander's commentary on Aristotle's *De Caelo* I.9, 279a21-30: see Alessandro d'Afrodisia, *La Provvidenza*, p. 41, n. 54). The crucial occurrences of the term providence (*ʿināya*) and choice (*iḫtiyār*) in §91 are not recorded in the final glossary in Genequand, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on the Cosmos*, p. 176 and 180, and the term *iḫtiyār* is alternatively translated there as both "choice" and "will" in different parts of Alexander's text.

59 In *Avicenna's De Anima (Arabic Text), being the psychological part of the Kitāb al-Shifāʾ*, ed. F. Rahman, London-New York-Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1959; repr. 1970, III, 7, p. 149, 4-5 (cf. *Liber de Anima seu Sextus de Naturalibus, I-II-III*. Édition critique par S. Van Riet, introduction par G. Verbeke, Louvain-Leiden, Peeters-Brill, 1972, p. 264, 77-265, 78), Alexander is called "the excellent among the ancient commentators" (*fāḍil qudamāʾ al-mufassirīn*; see *Liber de Anima seu Sextus de Naturalibus*, p. 265, ad l. 78; *Liber de Philosophia prima sive Scientia divina, V-X*, p. 464, ad linn. 92-93).

60 Aristotle is called "this excellent First Teacher" (*hāḍā l-fāḍil al-muʿallim al-awwal*) in Ibn Sīnā. *Al-Šifāʾ, al-Manṭiq, al-ʿIbāra*, ed. M. Al-Ḫuḍayrī, Cairo, Al-Hayʾa al-miṣriyya al-ʿāmma li-l-taʾlīf wa-l-našr, 1970 II, 4, p. 121, 2 (see Bertolacci, *The Reception of Aristotle's* Metaphysics *in Avicenna's* Kitāb al-Šifāʾ, p. 597). The term *fāḍil* ("excellent") occurs a few lines later in the same passage.

61 T. Street, "'The Eminent Later Scholar' in Avicenna's *Book of the Syllogism*", in *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 11 (2001), p. 205-218, esp. p. 217. The results of Street's analysis are further corroborated by N. Caminada, *Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā), Book of the Cure, Categories (al-Maqūlāt)*, Ph.D. Thesis, Scuola Normale Superiore, Sorbonne Université, 2018-19, vol. I, p. xxxvii-xxxviii; vol. II, p. 204-206.

Unproblematic in itself if taken in this broad historical perspective, the expression "excellent among the earlier [scholars]" remains troublesome in light of the different formula employed by Avicenna to designate Alexander in Text 1, shortly before our Text 4. However, while being different, the two expressions are in no way incompatible, especially if — in the light of the proposed interpretation of Text 4 — we consider that in Text 1 Alexander emerges as an eminent disciple of Aristotle, being even superior to Themistius in his understanding of Aristotle's positions. Moreover, the composite nature of the *Šifāʾ*, in which several bulks of previous textual material are reused by Avicenna[62]; the fact that Avicenna continued changing his way of referring to Alexander over time[63]; and the variations which his ascriptions of excellence to previous authors underwent[64], can perhaps explain Avicenna's shift in the way of referring to Alexander in two tightly contiguous citations in one and the same work.

The details of Text 4 deserve a specific independent analysis, which cannot be provided here. Hopefully, future research will disclose the precise identity of the group of scholars who quote Alexander and from whom Avicenna is dissenting in Text 4, how documented and careful was their reading of Alexander, and the precise historical and doctrinal reasons why Avicenna felt their interpretation of the Greek philosopher so dangerous as to be worthy of a refutation which spans over an entire chapter of the *Ilāhiyyāt*. Provisionally, there do not seem to be valid reasons to reject the traditional identification of "the excellent among the earlier [scholars]" in Text 4 with Alexander of Aphrodisias; on the contrary, further reasons to validate this identification can be found.

If the interpretation advanced here is correct, Text 4 provides a glaring attestation of how wide and deep was the reception of Alexander in Arabic. On the one hand, the group of scholars quoted by Avicenna in Text 4 looks deeply interested in Alexander, trying to find an accommodation between his endorsement of providence in (as it seems) the *Fī Mabādiʾ*

---

62 See A. Bertolacci, "Is God a Substance According to Avicenna?", in International Conference of the Aquinas and the Arabs International Working Group, *Creation and Artifice in Medieval Theories of Causality*, The Warburg Institute, University of London, 1-2 June 2017, org. C. Burnett, R. Taylor; Id., "Commenting on Aristotle Outside a Commentary: On Avicenna's Exegesis of the Arabic (and Persian?) Translations of the *Metaphysics* in some of His *Summae*".

63 Alexander is mentioned by name in a work of Avicenna later than the *Šifāʾ*, the *Ḥawāšī Kitāb al-nafs* (*Marginal Notes on the De Anima*, *Al-Taʿlīqāt ʿalà ḥawāšī Kitāb al-nafs li-Arisṭū*, in *Arisṭū ʿinda l-ʿArab*, ed. ʿA. Badawī, Cairo, Maktaba al-nahḍa al-miṣriyya, 1947, p. 78, 22; p. 101, 17; p. 106, 1; p. 114, 6; see Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, p. 329, n. 25), as he was in the earlier *Kitāb al-Mabdaʾ wa-l-maʿād*.

64 With an expression comparable to that of Text 4, al-Fārābī is called "the most excellent of the predecessors" (*afḍal man salafa min al-salaf*) but in a nuanced way ("is almost", *yakādu an yakūna*), in the *Letter to Kiyā* (Ibn Sīnā, *Mubāḥaṯāt*, ed. M. Bīdārfar, Qom, Maṭbaʿat-i Amīr, 1413/1992, p. 375.14-15; Engl. transl. in Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, p. 58, modified). However, al-Fārābī makes very cursory references to the issue of providence in his works (*Al-Farabi on the Perfect State: Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī's Mabādiʾ Ārāʾ Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*; A revised Text with Introduction, Translation and Commentary by R. Walzer, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1985, p. 276.16, see Walzer's commentary on p. 473; cf. D. Janos, *Method, Structure, and Development in al-Fārābī's Cosmology*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2012, p. 140, 161) and cannot be the author to whom Avicenna refers in Text 4. As Gutas notices, the qualified tribute that Avicenna pays to al-Fārābī in this passage contains *in nuce* the distinction, widespread in later *falsafa*, between Aristotle "First Teacher" and al-Fārābī "Second Teacher".

al-kull and some major tenets of Aristotelian cosmology (be it the cosmology of Aristotle himself, or the cosmology of Aristotle as later interpreted within the Peripatetic school) that look incompatible with Alexander's position. On the other hand, Avicenna himself is very interested in these scholars' interpretation of Alexander, although for polemical reasons, since he regards the doctrinal compromise they try to build between Alexander's own statement and the previous Aristotelian tradition in cosmology as too mechanical and rudimentary; Avicenna proposes instead a more subtle exegesis of Alexander, in which the outward meaning of his statement — seemingly at variance with Aristotle's position — should be distinguished from its inner purport. In both cases, Alexander emerges as a protagonist of the philosophical debates in eleventh-century *falsafa*, and as an author susceptible of different interpretations from leading Arabic philosophers.

Conclusion

Because of Avicenna's oblique way of referring to Alexander in the *Ilāhiyyāt*, as we have seen, or for other vicissitudes related to the translation process from Arabic into Latin, the deep impact and pivotal role of Alexander of Aphrodisias in Avicenna's metaphysics was obliterated in the Latin translation: in this latter, the reference to Alexander in Text 1 [c] was transformed into a reference to Aristotle[65], whereas the quotation of him in Text 4 remained as opaque as it is in the Arabic text. Thus, Avicenna's dependence on Alexander remained unnoticed even to a very knowledgeable connoisseur of Arabic philosophy in Latin Europe like Albert the Great, who took from the distorting translation of Avicenna's Text 1 in the *Liber de philosophia prima* the idea that Aristotle authored an epistle *de universitatis principio* (or *de principio universi esse*)[66], and made of this idea the corner-stone of his complex theory of the origin and composition of the *Liber de causis*.

---

65 Avicenna Latinus. *Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina*, p. 463, 65-71: "[b] Magister vero primus [= Aristotle] posuit numerum sphaerarum quae moventur secundum quod apparuit ei in suo tempore, et numerum earum sequitur numerus principiorum separatorum. [c] *Quod autem firmius est in dictis suorum sociorum* manifestat [sc. magister primus = Aristotle] et dicit, *in sua epistola quae est de principiis omnium*, quod motor universitatis caelorum unus est nec possunt esse plures, quamvis unaquaeque sphaera habeat motorem proprium et amatum proprium" (emphasis added). The mistranslation is compatible with an Arabic text in which section [c] started with *mā* ("what") rather than *man* ("who").

66 Albertus Magnus. *De intellectu et intelligibili* I, 1, 2, in *Opera omnia … cura et labore* A. Borgnet, Parisiis 1890-1899, vol. ix, p. 479b: "Haec autem disputatio [that every knower is such thanks to a first cause of knowledge] tota trahitur ex epistola quadam Aristotelis quam scripsit de universitatis principio, cuius mentionem in *Metaphysica* facit Avicenna". Albertus Magnus. *De causis et processu universitatis a causa prima*, ed. W. Fauser, Münster, Aschendorff, 1993, I, 1, 6, p. 13, 69-72: "Haec enim propositio [that from what is one only something which is one proceeds] ab Aristotele scribitur in epistula, quae est de principio universi esse, et ab Alfarabio et ab Avicenna et Averroe suscipitur et explanatur". Albertus Magnus. *De causis et processu universitatis a causa prima*, II, 1, 1, p. 61, 65-68: "David autem, sicut iam ante diximus, hunc librum collegit ex quadam Aristotelis epistula, quam de principio universi esse composuit, multa adiungens de dictis Avicennae et Alfarabii sumpta".

As a result, in the story we have tried to narrate, a certain work of Alexander and a certain Alexander emerges from the shadows of Greek philosophy, gets full splendor in Arabic philosophy thanks to Avicenna, and becomes later obfuscated by the Latin translation of Avicenna and radically eliminated from the philosophical scenario by Albert the Great. Avicenna's reliance on Alexander represents a specimen of Avicenna's system, in so far as it marks at the same time the continuity and the evolution of Avicenna's metaphysics, shows the creative way in which Avicenna rephrases and appropriates previous thought, and exhibits the manner in which he approaches the Peripatetic tradition and understands himself as a true (indeed, in his opinion, the most perspicacious) Peripatetic philosopher.

In this perspective, the texts of Avicenna that we have analyzed are interesting in various respects. In a historical perspective, they present us with a significant example of "Peripatetic tradition", namely they document the importance of works which may be regarded as spurious and not authentic, like the *Fī Mabādiʾ al-kull*, but which nonetheless have been greatly authoritative, imposing a considerable enlargement of scope and development of trends to the school heritage to which they belong. From the doctrinal point of view, the debate on whether Avicenna is a faithful witness of doctrinal stances of Alexander and Themistius unknown otherwise, or, on the contrary, he is a very interpretative receiver of previous authors, tending to project unduly onto his sources views that are not theirs but come from his own mind, shows in all evidence the powerful theoretical synthesis — made of both continuity and innovation — that he put on stage. Finally, from the philological point of view, we get a reminder that many important aspects of the text of Avicenna's *Ilāhiyyāt* in current printings — in our case the passages documenting his reliance on Alexander — remain shadowy and in need of better assessment.

MATTEO DI GIOVANNI

New Wine in Old Vessels

Alexander of Aphrodisias as a Source for Averroes' Metaphysics

Introduction: Beyond the Narrative

The historiography of Renaissance controversies has acquainted professionals and amateurs of philosophy alike with the narrative of an inextinguishable enmity between upholders of Alexander of Aphrodisias (fl. 200 AD), the greatest Greek commentator on Aristotle, and of his Arabic twin, Averroes of Cordoba (d. 1198). Most famous among the disputes stirring schoolmen in both Padua and Bologna is the issue of the human intellect and its relation to the body. Fiercely opposed by his colleague, the Alexandrian Pietro Pomponazzi (d. 1525), the Averroist Alessandro Achillini (d. 1512) defended Averroes' doctrine of a single, separate potential intellect against Alexander's notion that such an intellect is multiplied in the multiple human bodies and is made perishable by its dependence on corporeal matter. The controversy captured, just as natural, some of the historical reality concerning the distance between Averroes and the theory of the intellect that was attributed to Alexander[1]. In his long commentary (*tafsīr*) on the *De anima*, presumably completed around 1190, Averroes rebukes Alexander for his opinion which, he complains, "is extraordinarily distant from the words and demonstration of Aristotle"[2], so much so that "there is nothing to what Alexander said"[3].

1 This is not quite the historical Alexander, proponent of an emergentist view of the human intellect differing from the kind of sheer materialism for which he became known in the Arabic tradition. See J.-B. Brenet, "Alexander d'Aphrodise ou le matérialiste malgré lui", in P. J. J. M. Bakker (ed.), *Averroes' Natural Philosophy and Its Reception in the Latin West*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2015, p. 37-67.

2 English translations of Averroes' long commentary on the *De anima* are taken from Averroes, *Long Commentary on the* De Anima *of Aristotle*, trans. with introduction and notes by R. C. Taylor with T.-A. Druart, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2009, here p. 311; Latin text in Averroes Cordubensis. *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis* De anima *libros*, ed. F. S. Crawford, Cambridge, MA, The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1953, p. 395, 228-229.

3 Averroes, *Long Commentary on the* De Anima, p. 312; Latin text in *Commentarium magnum in* De anima, p. 395, 246.

Matteo Di Giovanni • Università degli Studi di Torino, matteo.digiovanni@unito.it

Alexander of Aphrodisias in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, ed. by Pietro B. Rossi, Matteo Di Giovanni, and Andrea A. Robiglio, Turnhout, 2021 (*Studia Artistarum*, 45), p. 59-76
© BREPOLS PUBLISHERS
10.1484/M.SA-EB.5.120536

At the same time, Averroes appears somewhat hesitant about ascribing such an aberration to his illustrious predecessor, and he does precisely on account of the high esteem in which the latter is held: "Alexander has greater nobility than to believe this, but the questions which were posed to him regarding the material intellect forced him to this <position>"[4]. The trajectory of Averroes' output, culminating in the long commentaries on Aristotle's major treatises, is in itself sufficient indication of his genuine admiration for Alexander's scholarship, of which Averroes' own commentaries are the celebration and perpetuation in a transformed cultural environment. In addition to the literary genre of analytical exegesis, recent scholarship has called attention to Alexander's influence upon the commentary technique itself that is exhibited by the mature Averroes, particularly in the field of natural philosophy. As noted by Ruth Glasner, "the writing of introductions and the logical analysis of arguments are two facets of the formal approach that characterizes the revision of the long commentary on the *Physics*. This approach reflects Averroes' growing interest in the Greek tradition late in his life, most notably in Alexander"[5]. One can indeed subscribe to the claim that the interest in Alexander became more pronounced in the later Averroes, but only as long as this is not to exclude similar predilection also from the earlier stages of Averroes' career. Already about 1174, when he completes his middle commentary (*talḫīṣ*) on the *Metaphysics*, Averroes is explicit that "not for every work of Aristotle there have come down to us commentaries on which one can rely, as is the case with those by Alexander and those who followed him"[6].

In fact, as pointed out by Rüdiger Arnzen, certain features of Alexander's interpretation are taken over already as early as the earliest of Averroes' expositions of the *Metaphysics*: namely his epitome (*ǧawāmiʿ*) of the same work, dated to the early sixties.[7] In his analysis Arnzen stresses Averroes' concurrence with Alexander on a number of issues such as the role of *Met.* Γ and that of the two polemical books M and N. The present study is intended to join previous discussion by documenting the effective pervasiveness of Alexander's subtext to Averroes' own construction of metaphysics as a science. This results in various points of intersection, besides the role of books Γ, M, N, which

4 Averroes, *Long Commentary on the* De Anima, p. 314; Latin text in *Commentarium magnum in* De anima, p. 398, 327-330, on which text see Brenet, "Alexander d'Aphrodise", p. 53-67. Similar caution might be at play in Averroes' claim that Alexander's opinion "regarding the apprehensive powers of the soul, *if it is as we have understood it,* is false" (italics mine); see *Long Commentary on the* De Anima, p. 314; Latin text in *Commentarium magnum in* De anima, p. 397, 317-398, 318.

5 R. Glasner, *Averroes' Physics: A Turning Point in Medieval Natural Philosophy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 52.

6 *Il Commento medio di Averroè alla* Metafisica *di Aristotele nella tradizione ebraica: Edizione delle versioni ebraiche medievali di Zerahyah Hen e di Qalonymos ben Qalonymos*, ed. M. Zonta, 2 vols., Pavia, Pavia University Press, 2011, vol. 1, p. 12 (my translation from Zonta's Italian).

7 For the epitome's borrowing from Alexander's view that metaphysics is prefaced with methodological prolegomena, see R. Arnzen, "Ibn Rušd on the Structure of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*", in *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale*, 21 (2010), p. 375-410, esp. p. 391-392; that defending the first principles of demonstration belongs in logic, see *ibid.*, p. 404-406; that *Met.* α centers on the finiteness of causes, see Averroes. *On Aristotle's* Metaphysics: *An Annotated Translation of the So-Called Epitome*, trans. R. Arnzen, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2010, p. 295, n. 505.

deeply shape Averroes' conception of the structure of metaphysics as a three-tiered undertaking, his appreciation of Aristotle's philosophical lexicon laid out in book Δ, his understanding of being in book E, and the argumentative strategy pursued in book Z for defining primary substance. Much of the substantial grip on metaphysics that is developed by Averroes proves in this way to be drawn on Alexander, whether directly or through the intermediary of secondary elaborations. In fact, while it is left to future research to demarcate Averroes' first-hand as opposed to second-hand use of his source (via al-Fārābī, to begin with), Alexander can already be demonstrated to constitute the ultimate archetype for Averroes' philosophical construction: with all its novelty and originality, this construction is by and large, as the dictum goes, new wine in old vessels.

Converging Perspectives in Alexander and Averroes: Textual and Doctrinal Evidence

The image of wine into vessels describes a first aspect of the relationship between the two commentators. That is the liquid character of Averroes' interpretation, specifically in the epitome, where he flexibly organizes the contents of the treatise around a fixed structure that is ultimately adopted from Alexander. The structure posited for metaphysics, and the function ascribed to its individual books, are outlined in Alexander's introduction to his commentary on *Met*. Λ, lost in Greek but preserved in the main within Averroes' long commentary on the same book. This is the ultimate source of Averroes[8] and it is reproduced below in its salient passages, taken from Averroes' prologue to book Λ, and followed by the thematically corresponding sections from Averroes' own exegesis of Aristotle.

> [**T. 1**] ***Alexander on the Structure of Metaphysics.*** Since this study <of metaphysics> inquires into being qua being, and this makes it necessary to inquire into both the principles (*mabādiʾ*) of being qua being and the entities attributed to it (*al-umūr al-lāḥiqa lahū*) — for every theoretical study comprises precisely these two kinds of knowledge — this study branches primarily into two subdivisions (*qismayn*). Moreover, since the Ancients set forth false views concerning the principles of beings, and it is incumbent upon <Aristotle> to refute those, it follows that this is like a third part (*ǧuzʾ*) of this study. Therefore, the primary parts (*aǧzāʾ*) of this treatise are three: one dealing with being qua being, another dealing with the attributes (*lawāḥiq*) of being qua being, and yet another one dealing with the false views that were set forth with regard to the principles of being[9].

8 No sections of Alexander's commentary on the *Metaphysics* were available to Averroes other than two thirds of his commentary on book Λ, according to a remark that he makes twice in the long commentary (Averroes Cordubensis. *Tafsīr Mā baʿd aṭ-ṭabīʿat ("Grand Commentaire" de la Métaphysique)*, ed. M. Bouyges, 3 vols., Bibliotheca Arabica Scholasticorum: Série Arabe, Beirut, Dar el-Machreq Editeurs, vol. 2, p. 1020, 13-1021, 6; *ibid*., vol. 3, p. 1393, 4-1394, 29. All translations of Averroes' *Metaphysics* commentaries and the Arabic Alexander are mine.).

9 Averroes. *Tafsīr* vol. 3, p. 1395, 11-1396, 5.

[**T. 2**] ***Alexander on Met. M-N.*** In the two books <M-N> that follow this one <i.e., Λ> <Aristotle> does not illustrate any <subjects> concerning <his> primary object (*ʿalā l-qaṣd al-awwal*) or rectify any of his own views. Rather, the books contain a refutation of the arguments from those who stated that the principles of beings are the Forms and Numbers[10].

[**T. 3**] ***Averroes on the Structure of Metaphysics***. With regard to the subdivisions (*aqsām*) <of metaphysics> we find that, while <metaphysics> spans across the <various> books attributed to Aristotle, it is nevertheless reducible to three subdivisions (*aqsām*). In the first <Aristotle> inquires into the sensible entities insofar as they are beings, all their genera (i.e., the ten categories), all the attributes (*lawāḥiq*) that are attributed to them, tracing them back to their principles (*awāʾil*) in the measure that it is possible within this part (*ǧuzʾ*). In the second he inquires into the principles (*mabādiʾ*) of substance, namely the separate entities, and determines what their being is like, tracing them further back to their first principle (*ilā mabdaʾihā l-awwal*) — which is God (exalted is He) — as well as determining the attributes and actions that are proper to Him. Moreover, he illustrates the relation that obtains between <God> and all the other beings and the fact that He is the ultimate perfection, the first form and the first agent, as well as <elucidating> all other features that are either specific to each and everyone of the separate entities or common to more than one of them. In the third subdivision (*qism*) <Aristotle> inquires into the subject-matters of compartmental disciplines and removes the errors committed by the Ancients who preceded him in the study of logic as much as the compartmental studies, to wit the disciplines of physics and mathematics […]. It is clear from this <which has been said> that indispensable to this discipline are only the first two parts (*al-ǧuzʾān al-awwalān*), whereas the third is supplementary (*ʿalā ǧihat al-afḍal*)[11].

Averroes agrees with Alexander in identifying three major partitions for the discipline of metaphysics, which he calls "subdivisions" (*qism*) like Alexander and, also like him, interchangeably names "parts" (*ǧuzʾ*). The second "subdivision" mentioned in the epitome is thus a "part", and Alexander likewise refers to two primary "subdivisions" which he calls "parts" within a few lines of text. The first of them is described by Alexander as a study of being qua being and its principles, which Averroes echoes as he claims that this section concerns the separate entities that are principles to "substance", to wit sensible substance.[12] Also the vocabulary of principles

10 *Ibid*., p. 1394, 13-1395, 2.

11 Averroes Cordubensis. *Risālat Mā baʿda l-ṭabīʿa*, ed. Ǧīrār Ǧihāmī, vol. 6 of *Rasāʾil Ibn Rušd al-falsafiyya*, Beirut, Dār al-fikr al-lubnānī, 1994, p. 32, 11-33, 12.

12 A difference remains in the emphasis that is laid upon Aristotle's approach, which is characterized as primarily theological by Averroes ("he inquires into the *principles* of substance, namely the separate entities"), whereas it is portrayed by Alexander as constituting the ontology of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* ("dealing with being qua being"). Even so, the link between the study of being and that of its principles is clearly implied already by Alexander as he notes, at the beginning of T. 1, that the rationale for the study of being is to seek its principles besides its properties.

(*mabdaʾ*) is identical across Alexander and Averroes, and it is clear that what the former names "being qua being" is the same that the latter specifies as "substance" by reason of Aristotle's doctrine that substance is the core meaning of being. There is also a further reason for this specification. The metaphysical investigation of separate principles is presented by Averroes as unfolding from the analysis of being and the ten categories into which being divides. Having thus introduced the theory of categories, he is justified in proposing a refined notion of being specifically in terms of *substance* — the first of categories — to be investigated in the following section.

Alexander is instead silent about the categories, at this stage, but he anticipates Averroes in locating the study of the attributes of being in the same section that complements the study of its principles (which is, to his mind, the section on being qua being). What is more, resorting to the same word for "attributes" (*lawāḥiq*), Averroes concurs with Alexander that those should be identified with the one and the many as much as the potential and the actual, discussed respectively in books Θ and I. The claim is all but obvious; for Aristotle presents the actual and the potential as senses, rather than properties or per se accidents, of being in *Met.* Δ 7 and other texts including *Met.* E 2 (1026 a 33-b 2) and *Met.* Θ 10 (1051 a 34-b 2).[13] That is to say, "being" itself means the actual and the potential, rather than having them as non-essential, ontologically subsequent (dependent) characterizations, which is what the language of attributes suggests. By the same token, the one is notoriously introduced in book Γ (1003 b 22-32) of the *Metaphysics* as a notion convertible with that of being, rather than an attribute of it: "[B]eing and unity are the same and are one thing in the sense that they are implied in one another as principle and cause are, not in the sense that they are explained by the same formula (though it makes no difference even if we interpret them similarly — in fact this would strengthen our case); for one man and a man are the same thing and existent man and a man are the same thing, and the doubling of the words in 'one man' and 'one existent man' does not give any new meaning (it is clear that they are not separated either in coming to be or in ceasing to be); and similarly with 'one', so that it is obvious that the addition in these cases means the same thing, and unity is nothing apart from being"[14]. At the same time it is clear that, insofar as an attribute is convertible with its subject, at least in this sense the one qualifies as an attribute of being, and so does the actual. Whatever its philosophical merits, this interpretation is expressly set forth by Alexander in his commentary on *Met.* Λ where it is noted that book I of the *Metaphysics* "examines the one and the many, the identical, the similar, the contrary, and the other common attributes (*al-lawāḥiq al-ʿāmma*) that belong to being qua

13 See e.g. Aristotle, *Met.* E 2, 1026 a 33-b 2: "But since the unqualified term 'being' has several meanings, of which one was seen to be the accidental, and another the true (non-being being the false), while besides these there are the figures of predication, e.g. the 'what', quality, quantity, place, time, and any similar meanings which 'being' may have; and again besides all these there is that which is potentially or actually". Eng. trans. in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. J. Barnes, 2 vols., Princeton, N. J., Princeton University Press, 1984, vol. 2., p. 1619.

14 *Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2, p. 1585.

being"[15] and that in book Θ Aristotle "considers that what is incumbent upon him to begin with, after this, is to examine the common attributes (*al-lawāḥiq al-ʿāmma*) of being qua being"[16] whereby "he first examines potentiality and actuality"[17]. The same view is affirmed by Averroes in chapter 3 of his epitome of metaphysics, where he announces precisely the study of the actual and the potential as well as the one and the many under the rubric of "entities that perform the function of attributes (*lawāḥiq*)" with respect to (sensible) being[18].

Surely this understanding of the one and the many, as well as the actual and the potential, in terms of attributes of being had become customary within the Aristotelian tradition subsequent to Alexander[19], and there is nothing to prove that Alexander is the immediate source of Averroes on this point. The comparison is indeed significant for the amount of textual indicators more than it is for the probative value of every single one of them considered on its own merits. Thus, for example, the lines of Alexander framed by his mentioned references to the attributes of being display notable kinship with Averroes' commentary as soon as they are read in conjunction with the other remarks that Alexander delivers higher up in his reading of Aristotle. These lines allude to the function of books M and N of the *Metaphysics* [T. 1]: "Since the Ancients set forth false views concerning the principles of beings, and it is incumbent upon <Aristotle> to refute those, it follows that this is like a third part of this study". Their obvious pendant is found in the complementary claim [T. 2] that "in the two books <M-N> that follow this one <i.e., Λ> <Aristotle> does not illustrate any <subjects> concerning <his> primary object or rectify any of his own views. Rather, the books contain a refutation of the arguments from those who stated that the principles of beings are the Forms and Numbers". Taken together, these annotations suggest that a separate segment of Aristotle's argumentation is, according to Alexander, constituted by books M and N, falling outside the primary focus of metaphysics insofar as they contain no positive doctrine but only a polemical appendix about the predecessors and their errors. Precisely the peripheral character of the books is emphatically endorsed by Averroes in his claim that they constitute a thematically separate unit (just as posited by Alexander) which is only supplementary (*ʿalā ǧihat al-afḍal*) and not essential to the overall argument of the treatise[20].

The claim is so substantial to Averroes' account that it may well explain also the otherwise problematic absence of M and N from the long commentary on the *Metaphysics*, despite the fact that both books were — at least partially — included in his previous exegesis, particularly in his middle commentary on the same work[21]. In

15 Averroes. *Tafsīr*, vol. 3, p. 1403, 16-18.
16 *Ibid.*, p. 1403, 12-13.
17 *Ibid.*
18 Averroes. *Risāla*, p. 98, 4.
19 For the Arabic tradition, especially Avicenna and his Farabian sources, see A. Bertolacci, *The Reception of Aristotle's* Metaphysics *in Avicenna's* Kitāb al-Šifāʾ*: A Milestone of Western Metaphysical Thought*, Leiden, Brill, 2006, p. 65-103, 149-211.
20 Cf. Arnzen, "Ibn Rušd on the Structure", p. 407-408.
21 See Zonta's overview of contents in *Commento medio*, vol. 1, p. 7-13.

fact, the middle commentary is the only one of Averroes' successive explications of the *Metaphysics* to include M and part of N (1087 a 29-1090 a 6), and there is all reason to believe that this peculiarity is due to unique character of middle commentaries, reportedly composed at the caliph's request and, if so, understandably bound to the expectations of the patron who commissioned them. Whenever Averroes is free to select his material from Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Alexander's notion that M and N are secondary within the discipline shows its implications in Averroes' decision to omit them. The same explanation might hold for the absence of chapter 5 from the text of the epitome of metaphysics as it was handed down to us. The chapter was supposed to cover the subjects of M and N, and is resoundingly announced by Averroes at the outset of the epitome. The promise, however, remained unfulfilled, and for all speculation to the effect that the text was lost on account of some editorial or mechanic incidents along the manuscript transmission — and the sophistication with which this was argued[22] — the most natural scenario remains simply that, however planned, the chapter was never composed. The influence of Alexander would be enough to account for this state of affairs, especially in view of the prominence and the consistency with which it features from the earlier epitome to the much later long commentary.

That said, there remains at least one important aspect in Averroes' presentation under which Averroes would seem to take a fairly independent stance from Alexander. This bears on the characterization of what, in the epitome [T. 3], is called the third subdivision of metaphysics, where Aristotle "removes the errors committed by the Ancients who preceded him in the study of logic as much as the compartmental studies, to wit the disciplines of physics and mathematics". Arnzen has already called attention to the role of al-Fārābī in Averroes' understanding of M and N as dealing specifically with physics and mathematics.[23] This characterization is not found as it stands in the Arabic Alexander, and it might in fact seem surprising that the two books are connected with the mentioned "compartmental studies" instead of metaphysics itself. Indeed, the Platonic views that are knocked in M and N do belong in metaphysics not only in that they are presented (and were received) as part and parcel of the inquiry that is unfolded in the treatise, but also on account of the transcendent, suprasensible nature of the Platonic Forms and Numbers. At the same time, it can be seen how the shift was made from metaphysics to physics and

22 R. Arnzen, "On the Nature and Fate of Chapter V of Ibn Rushd's *Epitome* of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*", in A. Akasoy, W. Raven (eds.), *Islamic Thought in the Middle Ages: Studies in Text, Transmission and Translation, in Honour of Hans Daiber*, Leiden, Brill, 2008, p. 43-58. None of Arnzen's arguments is decisive in ruling out the obvious hypothesis that the composition of the chapter was deliberately left unfulfilled, or at least indefinitely postponed, precisely on account of its ancillary character as opposed to the stated purpose of an epitome qua summation of only the discipline's essentials. Notably, all of Averroes' references to the chapter portray it as yet to be written, and it was all but unusual for Averroes to announce scholarly projects without following up. See his similar anticipation of a long commentary on book M (*Commento medio*, vol. 1, p. 12), for whose absence there is nothing to suggest any incident in the editorial or transmission process.

23 Arnzen, "Ibn Rušd on the Structure", p. 406.

mathematics given that numbers form the subject matter of mathematics to Aristotle's own mind, whereas the Platonic Forms discussed by Aristotle were introduced to explain also physical phenomena like generation[24].

Less intuitive is the further notion articulated in the epitome according to which the critique of Ancients' physics and mathematics is tied up with that of their logic, if indeed the same subdivision of metaphysics is charged with removing the errors committed "in the study of logic as much as the compartmental studies". Averroes' allusion is to the defence of the principle of non-contradiction that occupies the second half of book Γ, where Aristotle refutes the doctrine of Protagoras. Why is it then that the refutation makes up a unity with that of Plato and the Platonists featuring in M and N? Even on this point of exegesis Alexander may have a played a role of greater significance than is suggested by a merely cursory reading of his text[25]. To begin with, the annexation of Γ 4-8 to M and N is prepared, as it were, by the kind of treatment that is attested in Alexander, where the argument in Γ 4-8 is severed from its immediate context and presented as a distinct, virtually independent part of metaphysics. Alexander's text will be quoted in full below to serve as a parallel for the remainder of Averroes' analysis, but the relevant lines can be anticipated at least in their claim that metaphysics being "in charge of counter-arguing against those who remove inquiring (*yarfaʿu l-naẓar*) and deny its principles (*yaǧḥadu mabādiʾahū*), this <counter-argumentation> comes to be as it were a fifth part of it"[26]. That the reference is to Γ 4-8 is apparent from the subsequent remarks of Alexander, where the dispute over the principles is expressly located in the second part of the book: "Since an inquiry is sound only when <its> first premises (*al-muqaddimāt al-uwal*) are admitted, he considers it necessary to dispute first with (*yatakallama maʿa*) those who suppress these premises (*yubṭilu hāḏihi l-muqaddimāt*) and deny inquiring (*yaǧḥadu l-naẓar*). Consequently <Aristotle> makes both of these points in a single book, and he makes it follow the book of the letter Bāʾ <i.e., B>: this <following book> is that whose title is the letter Ǧīm <i.e., Γ>. As a result this book includes two parts, one of which is the logic specific (*al-manṭiq al-ḫāṣṣ*) to this discipline, whereas the other is the establishment of the first principle (*al-mabdaʾ al-awwal*) among those which we have by nature, I mean that which is prior to all. This <principle> is <Aristotle's> claim that affirmation and negation do not simultaneously hang together because that is the principle of inquiry (*mabdaʾ al-naẓar*), so much so that no arguing, proving or disproving will be sound from anyone who denies (*ǧaḥada*) this principle"[27]. The principle of non-contradiction which is prior to all for Alexander, and "the most

24 See e.g. Aristotle, *Met*. Z 8, 1033 b 26-28: "Obviously then the cause which consists of the Forms (taken in the sense in which some maintain the existence of the Forms, i.e. if they are something apart from the individuals) is useless with regard both to comings-to-be and to substances". Eng. trans. in *Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2, p. 1632.

25 Another consideration bearing on Aristotle's doctrine that no science proves its own principles (*Posterior Analytics* A 9) may have further convinced Averroes to retain the original position of their discussion within the perimeter of metaphysics, as argued by Arnzen ("Ibn Rušd on the Structure", p. 407).

26 Averroes. *Tafsīr*, vol. 3, p. 1396, 12-14.

27 *Ibid*., p. 1399, 15-1400, 8.

certain of all" in Aristotle (Γ 3, 1005 b 11-12), is defended in the second part of Γ in a general effort to underpin the inquiry of metaphysics by "disputing with" (*yatakallama maʿa*) those who "deny inquiring" (*yaǧḥadu l-naẓar*) and thus "suppress" (*yubṭilu*) "the first premises" (*al-muqaddimāt al-uwal*) of reasoning. Alexander's words are very well present to Averroes, who echoes them verbatim in his own comments on the second part of *Met.* Γ from his preface to the book: "In the second section <Aristotle> disputes with (*yatakallamu maʿa*) the Sophists, who deny (*yaǧḥadūna*) the first premises (*al-muqaddimāt al-uwal*) <of philosophical inquiry> and suppress inquiring (*yubṭilūna l-naẓar*), <which he does> after clarifying that the practitioner of this discipline is the one upon whom it is incumbent to dispute with (*yatakallama maʿa*) them"[28]. The language is manifestly reminiscent of Alexander, and the latter is reported to have construed the elenchus of *Met.* Γ as a section independent from the rest of the book and a separate part of metaphysics.

What is more, this section is not only thematically independent from its literary context; it is also, on Alexander's account, remarkably close in purpose and strategy to that which is constituted by M and N. Like the latter section, it sets out to refute the errors of Aristotle's predecessors, and interestingly the phrase that recurs in the Arabic Alexander to designate the "false views" (*arāʾ kāḍiba*) of the Ancients is the same for both the errors denounced in Γ and those exposed in M and N[29]. Furthermore, and more crucially, the nature of errors in all three books is described by Alexander in a way that is highly suggestive of a common root: in all cases they are said to consist in some misappreciation of what in sound philosophy plays the role of a principle — and, specifically, a principle of *being*. This is immediately evident for the Forms and Numbers criticized in M and N: both originate from a distorted take on what are genuine ontological principles, replacing as they do Aristotle's immanent and separate forms. But the same applies to the denial of the first principles of reason, which are for Alexander no less principles of *being* — only that this is *mental* as opposed to extramental being: "After all, <this study> must, insofar as it inquires into the subdivisions of beings and one of those is mental beings (*al-mawǧūdāt al-fikriyya*), inquire also into the principles (*mabādiʾ*) of this kind of beings and suppress (*tubṭila*) the false views set forth with regard to them"[30]. Averroes is led by such remarks to understand the contribution of *Met.* Γ as an effective counterpart, for mental being, to that which is provided by books M and N for extramental being. In this way he comes to conflate the relevant section of Γ along with M and N into a single branch of the metaphysical enterprise which he consistently describes as revolving around "the study of logic as much as the compartmental studies" of physics and mathematics.

> [**T. 4**] ***Alexander on Met. Γ.*** At the same time, since every theoretical study divides (*tanqasimu*) into two kinds of inquiry, one of which comprises the mode of inquiry (*naḥw naẓar*) <typical> of that study — what causes (*al-asbāb*) it provides, where it starts and where it ends, and how definitions are used therein,

28 Averroes. *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 297, 16-298, 3.
29 Cf. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 1396, 1 and 4; 1397, 2.
30 *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 1396, 14-1397, 2.

this being that which is called logic specific (*manṭiq ḫāṣṣ*) to that study — , whereas the second consists in knowing the contents of that study, this discipline further divides (*inqasama*) primarily into two parts (*ǧuzʾayn*): one logical (*manṭiqī*), specific (*ḫāṣṣ*) to <the discipline>, and one comprising that whose knowledge is aimed at therein. Consequently, there are two major parts (*ǧuzʾān ʿaẓīmān*), one of which divides into three, so that the parts (*aǧzāʾ*) of this discipline come to be four. Moreover, since this study is in charge of counter-arguing against those who remove inquiring (*yarfaʿu l-naẓar*) and deny its principles (*yaǧḥadu mabādiʾahū*), this comes to be as it were a fifth part (*ǧuzʾ*) of it; after all, <this study> must, insofar as it inquires into the subdivisions of beings and one of those is mental beings, inquire also into the principles (*mabādiʾ*) of this kind of beings and suppress (*tubṭila*) the false views set forth with regard to them[31].

[**T. 5**] ***Alexander on Met. Γ, continued.*** Now, the difficulties (*šukūk*) mentioned in this book <B> are of two kinds: those concerning the mode of inquiry (*ǧihat naẓar*) of this discipline and those concerning the subjects of investigation falling within it. And the first duty incumbent upon everyone who begins to inquire into this discipline in a demonstrative way is to acquire preliminary knowledge of how these difficulties <concerning the mode of inquiry> are solved. For, if he knows this, he will realize the discipline's mode of inquiry (*ǧihat al-naẓar*) that is built on demonstration, and through this mode he will distinguish the study that is called 'philosophy'. Accordingly, <Aristotle> considers it necessary to start off by solving the difficulties (*al-šukūk*) concerning the mode of inquiry (*naḥw naẓar*) belonging to this study. Furthermore, since an inquiry is sound only when <its> first premises (*al-muqaddimāt al-uwal*) are admitted, he considers it necessary to dispute first with (*yatakallama maʿa*) those who suppress these premises (*yubṭilu hāḏihi l-muqaddimāt*) and deny inquiring (*yaǧḥadu l-naẓar*). Consequently he makes both of these points in a single book, and he makes it follow the book of the letter Bāʾ <i.e., B>: this <following book> is that whose title is the letter Ǧīm <i.e., Γ>. As a result this book includes two parts[32], one of which is the logic specific (*al-manṭiq al-ḫāṣṣ*) to this discipline, whereas the other is the establishment of the first principle (*al-mabdaʾ al-awwal*) among those which we have by nature, I mean that which is prior to all. This <principle> is <Aristotle's> claim that affirmation and negation do not simultaneously hang together because that is the principle of inquiry (*mabdaʾ al-naẓar*), so much so that no arguing, proving or disproving will be sound from anyone who denies (*ǧaḥada*) this principle[33].

[**T. 6**] ***Averroes on Met. Γ.*** The discourse developed in this book <Γ> consists of two primary sections (*ǧumlatayn awwaliyyatayn*): one concerns the mode of inquiry (*naḥw naẓar*) <typical> of this discipline, how the inquiry is conducted,

---

31 Averroes. *Tafsīr*, vol. 3, p. 1396, 5-1397, 2.

32 I read *ǧuzʾayn* ("two parts") in lieu of the attested *ǧinsayn* ("two kinds"), *ibid.*, p. 1400, 4.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 1399, 9-1400, 8.

and the solution of questions (*masāʾil*) arising in regard to it <i.e., the mode of inquiry>. For matters stand as Aristotle says in book 11 of his *Animals*[34], namely that every discipline, whether noble or vile, comprehends two kinds of knowledge: information on that whose knowledge is sought, and 'some instruction' — that is to say, knowledge of the logic specific (*al-manṭiq al-muḫtaṣṣ*) to that discipline. Therefore, also this discipline must comprehend two kinds of knowledge. For every discipline has a definite genus into which it inquires, definite causes, definite accidents, and a definite mode of demonstration and definition. To acquire information on this is to inquire into that <logic> which is specific to the discipline. Therefore, in the first section (*ǧumla*) of this book <Aristotle's> talk is about defining the subject matter (*mawḍūʿ*) of the discipline, its concomitants (*lawāḥiq*), and causes — and in general the logical notions that are specific to this science (*al-umūr al-manṭiqiyya allatī taḫuṣṣu hāḏā l-ʿilm*). In the second section (*ǧumla*) <Aristotle> disputes with (*yatakallamu maʿa*) the Sophists, who deny the first premises (*yaǧḥadūna l-muqaddimāt al-uwal*) <of philosophical inquiry> and suppress inquiring (*yubṭilūna l-naẓar*), <which he does> after clarifying that the practitioner of this discipline is the one upon whom it is incumbent to dispute with (*yatakallama maʿa*) them[35].

The defense of the principle of non-contradiction represents only one of the two axes constitutive of book Γ. The other is represented by the resolution of the doubtful issues surrounding the requirements for metaphysics as a scholarly undertaking, which is what Alexander refers to as "difficulties" (*šukūk*), and Averroes as "questions" (*masāʾil*), pertaining to its "mode of inquiry" (*naḥw naẓar*). Aristotle does in fact devote chapters 1-3 of book Γ to addressing a number of aporiae raised in book B with regard to formal aspects of the "science sought" (ἡ ἐπιζητουμένη ἐπισήμη, 995 a 24) beginning with its scope and breath: is this a study of all kinds of causes (B 2, 996 a 18- 26) and all kinds of substances (B 2, 997 a 15-25)? Does it include also the properties of substances — and ultimately of being — as well as the first logical principles like the principles of non-contradiction and the excluded middle (B 2, 997 a 25-34; 996 b 26-97 a 15)? Aristotle in Γ takes up the scrutiny of the aporiae that is laid out in B, and concludes: "It is evident that it belongs to one science to be able to give an account of these concepts as well as of substance. This was one of the

34 That is, *De partibus animalium* A 1, 639 a 1-4: "Every study and investigation, the humblest and the noblest alike, seems to admit of two kinds of proficiency; one of which may be properly called educated knowledge of the subject, while the other is a kind of acquaintance with it (παιδείαν τινά). For an educated man should be able to form a fair judgement as to the goodness or badness of an exposition". Eng. trans. in *Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 1, p. 994. Aristotle goes on the explain that "acquaintance" with a subject is the general capacity to assess its sound methodology. This is then interpreted as acquaintance with the logical procedure, or simply the logic, that is specifically appropriate for a field of inquiry, whence the Arabic *manṭiq ḫāṣṣ* or *muḫtaṣṣ* that is found in the long commentary [T. 4-6], whereas the ninth-century Arabic translation of the text has, quite literally, "some instruction" (*adab min al-ādāb*) for the Greek παιδείαν τινά. See *The Arabic Version of Aristotle's Parts of Animals: Book XI-XIV of the Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, ed. R. Kruk, Amsterdam, North-Holland, 1979, p. 5, 4 of the Arabic text.

35 Averroes. *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 297, 6-298, 3.

questions in our book of problems. And it is the function of the philosopher to be able to investigate all things" (Γ 2, 1004 a 31-b 1)[36]. By the same token, the science of metaphysics is to explore all four kinds of causes, since those are the first causes of being qua being, and "it is of being as being that we also must grasp the first causes" (Γ 2, 1003 a 31-32)[37]. As for the different kinds of substances, "there are as many parts of philosophy as there are kinds of substance, so that there must necessarily be among them a first philosophy and one which follows this" (Γ 2, 1004 a 2-4)[38].

Already in his commentary on *Met*. Γ which is preserved in Greek, Alexander is fully aware that the analysis in book Γ provides a direct response to the aporiae of book B.[39] The point, reiterated in his exposition of Λ, is appropriated by Averroes in his own commentary on Γ. At the same time it is clear that the aporiae considered in Γ are only a subclass of those which are presented in B and that they form a coherent subset centering on a description of what metaphysics should be like as a science of being, rather than dealing with any of its actual teachings. Averroes is thereby reminded of the opening lines of Aristotle's *De partibus animalium* where a distinction is drawn between knowledge of a discipline's teachings and knowledge of its epistemic status and boundaries. The latter is what enables one to form an idea of the discipline even without having thematic knowledge of it, only by understanding its method of exposition.[40] This is the same as the "mode of inquiry" evoked by Alexander and further explicated by both Alexander and Averroes in terms of a "specific logic" (*manṭiq ḫāṣṣ*) to metaphysics. In Averroes' words [T. 6] that consists in "defining the subject matter of the discipline, its concomitants, and causes — and in general the logical notions that are specific to this science". The language is evocative of the general schema for scientific investigation laid out by Aristotle in *Posterior Analytics* A 10. Every study qualifying as a science needs to exhibit three essential requisites: (i) a subject matter or a genus which corresponds to the kind of entities subjected to investigation; (ii) a number of properties — or concomitants — that belong per se to the subject and are established for it; (iii) a set of principles from which said properties are established.

When this schema is applied, or indeed specified, to metaphysics, what becomes outlined is a theory of science — a "logic" in the commentators' language — that is uniquely suited to the discipline (*manṭiq ḫāṣṣ*), and that is by and large a characterization

36 Eng. trans. in *Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2, p. 1586.

37 *Ibid*., p. 1584.

38 *Ibid*., p. 1585.

39 See Alexander Aphrodisiensis. *In Aristotelis Metaphysica commentaria,* ed. M. Hayduck, Berlin, Reimer, 1891, p. 246, 13-24; Eng. trans. in Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On Aristotle's* Metaphysics 4, trans. A. Madigan, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1993, p. 21.

40 This reference to *De partibus animalium* was likely found in the Alexander available to Averroes, who appears to allude to it in T. 4: "Since every theoretical study divides into two kinds of inquiry, one of which comprises the mode of inquiry <typical> of that study — what causes it provides, where it starts and where it ends, and how definitions are used therein, this being that which is called logic specific to that study — , whereas the second consists in knowing the contents of that study, this discipline further divides primarily into two parts: one logical, specific to <the discipline>, and one comprising that whose knowledge is aimed at therein".

of metaphysics in terms of its proper subject (being qua being), sought properties (the properties of being qua being), and principles (the causes of all that is, i.e., all genera of causes)[41]. Such is the apparent import of Alexander's comment [T. 4] that the specific logic to metaphysics details "what causes it provides, where it starts and where it ends", to which he adds: "and how definitions are used". The latter remark seems further adumbrated in Averroes' reference to "the logical notions that are specific to this science", which he lists along with the subject matter, concomitants, and causes[42]. Unfortunately, the phrasing is, as it stands in Averroes as much as Alexander, vague enough to call for a good deal of speculation about the point that it is to convey. We know that in the *Organon* Aristotle sets apart different kinds of definitions, namely real definitions stating a thing's essence and nominal definitions stating the meaning of its name, and it may certainly be that something of this distinction is being envisaged by the commentators[43]. It is more likely, however, that the point is different and a clue to it is afforded by the immediately following remarks of Alexander about the fashion in which metaphysical notions are defined in *Met.* Δ:

> [**T. 7**] ***Alexander on Met. Δ.*** Once <Aristotle> is done with this point, in this book <Γ>, he considers it most necessary that the book be followed by a definition of the notions (*tafṣīl al-maʿānī*) for which nouns are used in this discipline, and that the best for the purpose of instruction is to mention them in a single separate book. This he does in the book of the letter Dāl <i.e., Δ>, which is placed after the book of the letter Ǧīm <i.e., Γ> but before the other books for the reason that the first <task> to start from for anyone who is determined to demonstrate a given object of investigation is to analyse the different senses (*an yašraḥa*) of the noun that is said of that object, if it has more than one meaning (*iḏā kāna yadullu ʿalā maʿān kaṯira*), and especially of those nouns which are said by analogy (*bi-tanāsub*), namely <those applying to> the objects of investigation specific to this discipline, given that the noun 'being' (*mawǧūd*) is certainly said by analogy as he shows in this discipline[44].

---

41 For this notion of specific logic, see R. Hoffmann, "La puissance argumentative de la logique spéciale dans la métaphysique d'Ibn Rushd", in M. A. Sinaceur (ed.), *Penser avec Aristote*, Toulouse, Erès, 1991, p. 667-76; Arnzen, "Ibn Rušd on the Structure", p. 389-394, 404-408.

42 In T. 6 Averroes adds also the examination of the "mode of demonstration" (*naḥw min al-burhān*) typical of a discipline to the constituents of its specific logic, and elsewhere he insists that metaphysics has its peculiar way of demonstrating, which he calls "demonstration of sign" (*burhān al-dalīl*); see M. Di Giovanni, "Demonstration and First Philosophy: Averroes on *Met.* Zeta as a Demonstrative Examination (*al-faḥṣ al-burhānī*)", in *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale*, 20 (2009), p. 95-126. However, he is more likely in the present context to be hinting at Aristotle's remarks in *Met.* Γ 4 — which he takes to be anticipated in Γ 3, 1005 b 2-5 — to the effect that the first principles studied in metaphysics are demonstrated in another way than by deduction, namely by refutation. See Averroes. *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, p. 342, 5-343, 9. The complex of this specific logic contributes to those which Averroes in commenting on *Met.* Z (*ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 745, 6-10) styles "prolegomena" (*al-tawṭiʾa wa-l-muqaddimāt*) for the core metaphysics.

43 See Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* B 8-10.

44 Averroes. *Tafsīr*, vol. 3, p. 1400, 9-1401, 1.

[**T. 8**] ***Averroes on Met. Δ***. Aristotle's goal in this book <Δ> is to define the meanings of nouns in accordance with the notions (*an yufaṣṣila dalālāt al-asmāʾ ʿalā l-maʿānī*) that are investigated in this discipline, namely those which somehow constitute the subject matter of the study <of metaphysics>. Such are the nouns that are said with reference to an identical thing but in different ways. For this reason, he makes the inquiry concerned with the analysis of the senses of these nouns (*al-naẓar fī šarḥ hāḏihi l-asmāʾ*) an <independent> part of this discipline. He does not fold the inquiry that is concerned with defining an equivocal noun into that which is concerned with the notion itself signified by that noun, in such a way that the <former inquiry> is not a distinct part of this study: that is what he does in physics for every object of investigation; for there <i.e., in physics> he defines nouns for the only purpose of singling out those notions which are being investigated from all others, whereas what he has in view here <i.e., in metaphysics> is to enumerate those things which are presently being investigated. Indeed, the inquiry into nouns <that is conducted> here is of the same kind as the inquiry which is concerned with the properties of the subject (and what plays its role) investigated by the metaphysician. This is why <the metaphysician's inquiry into nouns> must receive an independent treatment and come before all objects of investigation occurring in this discipline, in contrast to those cases where a noun signifying an object of investigation is defined <merely> for disambiguation: in those cases it is indeed fit for <Aristotle> to define the noun wherever the object itself is being investigated, lest some error occur from the equivocality of the noun. Thus, the purposes <of defining, in metaphysics and in physics> differ widely[45].

Alexander sets out to account for a peculiarity of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* compared to other writings of his, namely that it presents a book entirely reserved for a philosophical lexicon of key metaphysical concepts rather than an actual inquiry into any of them. He explains this situation with the demands of instruction, requiring some preliminary disambiguation of language as a means to achieve clarity and precision in communication. He submits in this vein that the task is especially desirable for metaphysics on account of the inherent polysemy of its subject matter, being, and its objects of investigation. Averroes for his part revives the same line of argument, but is more explicit in emphasizing the special connection between the subject matter of metaphysics and the peculiar nature of book Δ. On his account, the subject matter that is being qua being has its polysemy, as it were, reverberated through the many properties that belong to it. These include the one, the same, the other, their contraries, and all other essential attributes connected with being. They are, like being itself, said in many ways just as noted by Aristotle: "Since all things are referred to that which is primary, as for instance all things which are one are referred to the primary one, we must say that this holds good also of the same and the other and of contraries in general; so that after distinguishing the various senses of each, we must then explain

45 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 475, 2-476, 2.

by reference to what is primary in each term, saying how they are related to it"[46]. On this premise, the distinction of senses turns out to be an integral component of the inquiry into all such notions. To the extent that they are the properties of being, their disambiguation is both an essential and a distinctive task of metaphysics, rather than a duty merely enjoined by the universal demands of scholarly communication. Therefore, Aristotle's purpose in book Δ is not merely, as it might *prima facie* appear, the same purpose of effective instruction. Indeed, metaphysics is set apart from other philosophical undertakings, for example physics, precisely by the unique pertinence of semantic disambiguation to the specificity of its scope and content. Such is the peculiar way in which definitions are made in metaphysics, and such is presumably how Averroes — inspired by Alexander — construes the contribution that is brought by the analysis of the senses of being and its properties in Γ 2 to the specific logic of metaphysics.

Following book Δ, the universal scope of metaphysics is said to demand, *prima facie*, that the study of being and its properties, namely extramental or per se being, should extend to include all being: not only extramental or per se being, but also mental being (being as true) and accidental being. This is noted in book E, where it is added that not all of these stand on the same level of prominence: only extramental or per se being is independent and in virtue of itself, whereas both mental and accidental beings are dependent upon per se being and "related to" (περί) it. Alexander interprets being so related as evidence that, contrary to per se being, the other two are instances of what he calls "defective" (*nāqiṣ*) being and he sees as a major concern of Aristotle in book E:

> [**T. 9**] ***Alexander on Met. E***. In this book his inquiry concerns the distinction of the being that is by accident and in the soul from the being that is real (*al-huwiyya al-ḥaqīqiyya*) … Once he has shown that the being that is by accident and that which is in thought are defective (*nāqiṣatān*), and that the <being> whose examination is conducted by this discipline is the real being (*al-huwiyya al-ḥaqīqa*) that exists outside the soul, he begins after this to examine this being[47].

The exact same point is made by Averroes in his commentary, where Averroes even adopts Alexander's phrasing of "defective being" verbatim:

> [**T. 10**] ***Averroes on Met. E***. Let us leave aside the examination of being that is by accident and that which is true, namely that which is in the soul. For being by accident has no definite cause and being true also has no cause but the soul. Therefore, both can be counted as belonging in the genus of defective being (*al-huwiyya al-nāqiṣa*), and for this reason it is necessary to leave aside the examination of these two beings and examine <instead> the perfect being which is that existing outside the soul[48].

---

46 Aristotle, *Met.* Γ 2, 1004 a 25-30. Eng. trans in *Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2, p. 1586.

47 Averroes. *Tafsīr*, vol. 3, p. 1401, 8-1402, 6.

48 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 742, 14-743, 3.

The examination of perfect being existing outside the soul is finally undertaken in *Met*. Z, marking for Averroes and Alexander the effective beginning of metaphysics after the methodological prolegomena of the previous books. *Metaphysics* Zeta has been aptly described as the "Mount Everest of ancient philosophy"[49] due to the disheartening difficulty of its argumentation in determining what entities qualify as primary substances. The strategy that it pursues is variously interpreted in various matters of detail, but one point is uncontroversially established. A long portion of the book consists of examining what it is to be an essence, since essence may be thought to be primary substance. Current scholars tend to agree that all of the key points about essence are made by Aristotle in Z 4-6, with some secondary elaboration following in Z 10-12 on the complementary notion of definition. It is quite striking, therefore, to find Alexander foregrounding the analysis of definition in Z 10-12 instead of that of essence in Z 4-6, readily followed by Averroes:

> [**T. 11**] ***Alexander on* Met. Z.** Once he has shown that the being that is by accident and that which is in the mind are defective, and that the <being> whose examination is conducted by this discipline is the real being that exists outside the soul, <Aristotle> begins after this to examine this being. Since substance is the principle of this being, he undertakes to investigate what the principles of substance are, and he starts this <investigation> from the principles of the substance generated and corruptible. He makes known that <these principles> are form and matter, and he traces a path leading to knowledge of the fact that forms are substances and ensuing from definitions. That is, since he shows that definitions indicate something of sensible substances which is substance to them, and that forms is what they indicate, from this he gathers that forms are substances, that <forms> are one and the same with the thing of which they are a form, and that for this reason accidents are not substances, nor does knowing things require introducing separate forms other than the sensible because what is indicated by the definitions of things would be other than the things <defined>[50].
>
> [**T. 12**] ***Averroes on* Met. Z.** Once he has shown in the book <Z> which precedes this <H> that forms are substances on account of the fact that what definitions indicate is substances and definitions indicate forms — and on account of the fact that why-questions are also about forms — <Aristotle> intends here to examine the primary substantial differences by which generic forms are differentiated[51].

Alexander explains that book Z undertakes the study of being (qua substance) after Aristotle has determined, in book E, which sense of being is to be studied. For metaphysics, albeit a universal science of being, proceeds to single out, from all senses of being, that which is not merely mental (being as true) nor accidental. Once that is made clear, argues Alexander, the way to establish the principles of per se and extramental being is by means of a philosophical analysis of definitions, and Averroes

---

49 M. Burnyeat, *A Map of Metaphysics Zeta*, Pittsburgh, PA, Mathesis Publications, 2001, p. 1.

50 Averroes. *Tafsīr*, vol. 3, p. 1402, 4-15.

51 *Ibid*., vol. 2, p. 1035, 8-11.

in commenting on book H endorses his claim that it is precisely insofar as definitions are assumed to declare the substances of things — i.e., primary substances — that they are key in proving such substances to be forms: for what definitions make clear is just the forms of the things defined. The same notion is adumbrated also earlier in Averroes' commentary, during his explication of the third aporia of book B as to whether substances are studied by one science or more (B 2, 997 a 15-25). This is likely, in Averroes' reading, to be an aporia about whether primary substances are established through the analysis of definitions alone or in other ways too: in Averroes' words, "whether the logical methodology (*al-ṭarīqa al-manṭiqiyya*) through which substances are made known is only one — that is, through definitions — ore more than one"[52]. There is something remarkable in this injection of Alexander's material into multiple passages of the long commentary, outside the immediate context of book Z. That is all the more evidence for Averroes' degree of intimacy with, and assimilation of, the specifics of Alexander's interpretation. The observation should alert scholars of Averroes, no less than those of Alexander, to the interpenetration of the two commentaries and the consequent need for an integrated study of both, promising to open up new and substantial prospects on the transmission of knowledge from late antiquity to the Islamic world.

Conclusion: New Avenues of Research

The analysis of sources behind the long commentary on the *Metaphysics* has provided, it is hoped, significant evidence for the centrality of Alexander's interpretation to that which is set forth by Averroes in strategic places, typically his introductions to single books — besides his epitome — of the treatise. The collected evidence corroborates indications from recent scholarship pointing to an early use of Alexander that can be traced back to the very inception of Averroes' career as a scholar of Aristotle. In this way it supplies a fresh outlook into the still underinvestigated history of the transmission of scientific and philosophical texts to the Islamic West, the formation of Averroes' library, the nature and scope of his textual resources.

The argument that is developed here, it should be noted, rests on the fundamental assumption that what Averroes, in his prologue to *Met.* Λ, reports as — and has all along been assumed to be — the commentary of Alexander, is indeed so. The assumption is neither necessary nor obvious. In fact, the attribution of the above-quoted fragments to Alexander was powerfully questioned in previous scholarship[53] and,

52 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 198,10-12. For Averroes' interpretation of *Met.* B and a French translation of the corresponding long commentary, see Averroes, *Grand Commentaire (*Tafsīr*) de la* Métaphysique, *Livre* Bêta, presentation et traduction de L. Bauloye, Paris, Vrin, 2002. Further remarks about the analysis of definition in the strategy of *Met.* Z, as understood by Averroes, in Di Giovanni, "Demonstration and First Philosophy".

53 J. Freudenthal, *Die durch Averroes erhaltenen Fragmente Alexanders zur Metaphysik des Aristoteles*, Berlin, [Verlag der Königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften], 1885, p. 67-69; 122-123.

though sometimes assumed by individual scholars[54], never established on positive, i.e., historical and philological, grounds. The case is now revisited in a recent study concluding that the whole section subjected to Averroes' exposition (*talḫīṣ*) in the relevant passage of his commentary is truly a long quotation from a Syro-Arabic version of an ancient recension of Alexander's commentary on the *Metaphysics*, as evidenced primarily by the peculiar system of notation used for designating individual books of the treatise[55]. This conclusion has momentous consequences for the textual scholar as much as the historian of philosophy. To mention just one, it means that Averroes represents indirect evidence of primary importance for Alexander's interpretation of all those books of the *Metaphysics* for which no commentary of his is preserved in Greek — to wit, books E through N.

As argued in the present study, Averroes appropriates material going back to Alexander and he silently intersperses it throughout his own exegesis in such a way that the long commentary turns out to be, at once, the work of Averroes' mind and an invaluable testimony to Alexander's. The information that it discloses is as such twice important, and it urges in-depth scrutiny towards the extraction of not only Averroes' but also Alexander's doctrine which is therein encapsulated. The task is difficult and delicate as it requires the prior assessment of procedures and modalities by which Alexander's material is interwoven into the fabric of Averroes' exegesis. There is no other way to gain this insight than by exploring the extant commentary of Alexander afresh, with a view to understanding the nature and extent of its percolation through Averroes, to then apply this understanding to a study of those portions of the long commentary for which no comparison with the Greek Alexander is viable. Along the way, one should naturally be mindful of the measure of alteration to which Alexander's commentary was subjected in the late ancient tradition before it reached the Arabs, if indeed what the Arabs received is, as it appears, a redaction produced within the Neoplatonic schools of philosophy[56]. If the endeavor is not such as to dishearten the Graeco-Arabic scholar — needless to say, the only one with jurisdiction over the whole matter — then it promises its reward in virtue of its very arduousness: as ancient wisdom has it, delight is in the arduous.

---

54 Among whom C. Genequand (trans.), *Ibn Rushd's Metaphysics: A Translation with Introduction of Ibn Rushd's Commentary on Aristotle's* Metaphysics*, Book Lām*, Leiden, Brill, 1984; A. Martin (trans.), *Averroès: Grand commentaire de la* Métaphysique *d'Aristote; Livre Lam-Lambda*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1984; R. Ramón Guerrero, "Averroes: El 'Proemio' de su Comentario al libro lambda de la 'Metafísica'", in *Anales Del Seminario de Historia de la Filosofía* 1, no. 2 (1996), p. 275-295.

55 M. Di Giovanni, O. Primavesi, "Who Wrote Alexander's Commentary on *Metaphysics* Λ? New Light on the Syro-Arabic Tradition", in C. Horn (ed.), *Aristotle's Metaphysics Lambda: New Essays*, Philosophie der Antike 33, Boston, De Gruyter, 2016, p. 11-66. Cf. S. Fazzo, M. Zonta, "The First Account of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in Fourteen Books: Alexander of Aphrodisias' 'Fragment Zero", in *Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scolastica*, 4 (2016), p. 985-995, differing in important matters of textual and historical presentation (see note below).

56 M. Di Giovanni, O. Primavesi, "Who Wrote Alexander's Commentary on *Metaphysics* Λ?", p. 29-33, 61-62 (unlike S. Fazzo, M. Zonta, "The First Account", who do not detect any trace of a recension of Alexander's commentary, as distinct from his original, composed probably in late antiquity and certainly prior to Averroes).

JOËL BIARD

L'Alexandrisme comme rationalité philosophique

La question de l'usage que Jean Buridan fait d'Alexandre, ou plus exactement de positions traditionnellement attribuées à Alexandre, est controversée. Ce fut le mérite d'Olaf Pluta, à la suite de Konstanty Michalski, que d'attirer l'attention sur la place prise par la lecture alexandriste d'Aristote dans les *Questions sur l'âme* de Buridan. Il a également montré comment, à la suite de Buridan, toute une tradition interprétative s'inscrivait dans le même cadre théorique, d'Albert de Saxe à Laurent de Lindores[1]. Mais au-delà, il a défendu la thèse selon laquelle Buridan assumerait lui-même les positions alexandristes et défendrait par conséquent une position mortaliste, dite même matérialiste, à peine atténuée par une référence obligée à la position de la foi catholique. Cette lecture a suscité des réserves voire des rejets. C'est principalement Jack Zupko qui a formulé les critiques les plus précises et les plus sévères, notamment dans son article « On Buridan's Alledged Alexandrianism »[2].

1 Voir notamment O. Pluta, *Kritiker der Unsterblichkeitsdoktrin in Mittelalter und Renaissance*, Amsterdam, Verlag Grüner, 1986 ; *Id.*, « How Matter Becomes Mind : Late Medieval Theories of Emergence », *in* H. Lagerlund (ed.), *Forming the Mind. Essays on the Internal Senses and the Mind/Body Problem from Avicenna to the Medical Enlightment*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2007, p. 149-168. Déjà Michalski avait attribué à Buridan une sympathie pour les thèses considérées comme alexandristes : voir K. Michalski « L'influence d'Averroès et d'Alexandre d'Aphrodisias dans la psychologie du XIV^e^ siècle », dans *Bulletin international de l'Académie polonaise des sciences et des lettres,* Classe de Philologie, Classe d'Histoire et de Philosophie, 1928, p. 14-16, repris dans O. Pluta (éd.), *Die Philosophie im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert*, Verlag B. Grüner, Amsterdam, 1988, p. li-lii : « L'influence du matérialiste qu'était Alexandre d'Aphrodisias s'est d'abord manifestée sur les bords de la Seine chez Jean Buridan, puis chez tous ses élèves et partisans tels que Nicole Oresme, Pierre d'Ailly, Laurent de Lindores etc. » ; voir aussi *Id.*, « La lutte pour l'âme à Oxford et à Paris », dans G. Ryle (éd.), *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Philosophy Held at Oxford, England, Sept. 1-6, 1930*, London, H. Milford,1931, p. 508-515 ; repris dans Pluta (éd.), *Die Philosophie im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert*, p. liii-lx.

2 J. Zupko, « On Buridan's Alledged Alexandrianism », in *Vivarium*, 42 (2004), p. 43-57 ; *Id.* « John Buridan on the Immateriality of the Intellect », in H. Lagerlund (ed.), *Forming the Mind : Essays on the Internal Senses and the Mind/Body Problem from Avicenna to the Medical Enlightenment*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2007, p. 59-92. Anneliese Maier avait déjà mis en question l'Alexandrisme de Buridan dans A. Maier, « Metaphysische Hintergründe der spätscholastischen Naturphilosophie », dans *Studien zur Naturphilosophie der Spätscholastik*, vol. iv, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1955, p. 27.

Joël Biard • Université François Rabelais, Tours, joel.biard@univ-tours.fr

Alexander of Aphrodisias in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, ed. by Pietro B. Rossi, Matteo Di Giovanni, and Andrea A. Robiglio, Turnhout, 2021 (*Studia Artistarum*, 45), p. 77-93
© BREPOLS PUBLISHERS
10.1484/M.SA-EB.5.120537

Il semble que ces réserves soient aujourd'hui largement partagées. Et il est vrai qu'à de nombreuses reprises tout au long des *Questions sur l'âme,* au cours de son argumentation Buridan semble présupposer le caractère immatériel de l'intellect[3]. Mais de ce fait, on s'en tient souvent à l'idée que pour Buridan c'est le point de vue de la foi qui est déclaré vrai, sans véritablement examiner le statut des différentes positions mises en regard. Et pourtant, on aurait tort de passer trop vite sur le statut que Jean Buridan accorde à l'interprétation dite « alexandriste » du statut de l'intellect humain.

La triangle des Bermudes de l'immortalité

On ne trouve pas chez Jean Buridan de question explicitement dédiée à la question de la mortalité ou de l'immortalité de l'âme, ni même de question sur la séparabilité. La question de la mortalité est en effet greffée sur celle de la séparabilité, plus proprement aristotélicienne. Les débats qui se sont développés à ce sujet dès les commentaires grecs et notamment celui d'Alexandre d'Aphrodise reposent sur deux piliers. Premièrement, le statut de l'âme comme forme : quelle est son origine, est-elle placée déjà existante dans la matière (infusée) ou tirée (éduite) d'elle, est-ce qu'elle est, et en quel sens, une « forme matérielle » ? Deuxièmement le statut de l'intellect comme « partie » séparable de l'âme.

Sur ces questions, Buridan représente un moment décisif dans la mise en place d'une configuration de positions possibles[4], qui s'appuie sur des données antiques, arabes et latines provenant du siècle précédent (notamment la critique thomiste d'Averroès), mais qui semble prendre forme au milieu du XIV^e^ siècle, et grâce à lui.

Dans la première question de son commentaire, qui porte sur le sujet de la psychologie, Buridan attribue déjà clairement à Aristote la double thèse de l'inséparabilité de l'âme, et de l'impossibilité pour l'intellect d'exercer ses opérations sans avoir recours au corps[5]. De même au cours de la question 3 sur le livre III, qui demande si l'âme

---

3 On ne saurait à cet égard se satisfaire de l'idée d'une dissimulation, suggérée par O. Pluta, « Persecution and the Art of Writing. The Parisian Statute of April 1, 1272 and its Philosophical Consequences », in P. J. J. M. Bakker (éd.), *Chemins de la pensée. Mélanges offerts à Zénon Kaluza*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2002, p. 563-585 ; voir à ce sujet les remarques critiques de L. Bianchi, *Pour une histoire de la double vérité*, Paris, Vrin, 2008, p. 102-108.

4 Dans son article A. de Libera, « Formes assistantes et formes inhérentes. Sur l'union de l'âme et du corps, du Moyen Âge à l'Âge classique », *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge*, 81 (2014), p. 197-248, de Libera parle à cet égard de « topique » ; le terme est adéquat, simplement je ne la qualifierai pas pour ma part de « topique de Latran » puisque ni le Concile de Latran en 1512-1517 ni le concile de Vienne en 1311-1312 ne sont selon moi à l'origine de cette configuration.

5 Johannes Buridanus. *Quaestiones in Aristotelis De Anima secundum tertiam sive ultimam lecturam*, Latin text and English translation, edited by G. Klima (general editor), Book I edited and translated by P. Hartman; Book II edited by P. G. Sobol and translated by G. Klima; Book III edited and translated by J. Zupko, Cham, Springer, à paraître, lib. I, q. 1 : « intendit Aristoteles quod quamvis anima esset inseparabilis a corpore nec potest suas operationes exercere sine corpore, tamen possibile

est forme substantielle du corps, il apparaît que d'un point de vue aristotélicien, la réponse fait pas de doute. Alors pourquoi s'y attarder ? Buridan explique qu'en réalité cette question a été soulevée pour une seule raison : distinguer les opinions portant sur le statut de l'intellect et les comparer entre elles.

Sans doute prolonge-t-il ainsi un geste de Thomas d'Aquin. Celui-ci a repris à la lettre la présentation qu'Averroès avait faite d'Alexandre. Dans cette opération, la position d'Alexandre était plus ou moins assimilée à un matérialisme de type galénique (âme tirée ou éduite d'une complexion de qualités corporelles)[6]. Par la suite on voit des auteurs comme Raoul le Breton esquisser une tripartition de positions ajoutant à Averroès et Alexandre une position conforme à la foi catholique, modelée sur la position thomiste. Il y a cependant une différence notable avec ce que nous lisons chez Buridan. On ne trouve pas une caractérisation systématique et comparative du régime discursif de chacune des positions ; surtout, aucun privilège n'est accordé à la position d'Alexandre du point de vue de la raison naturelle[7].

Le texte de Buridan est beaucoup plus développé.

Comment y sont caractérisées chacune de ces positions ?

1. Alexandre : l'âme est une forme matérielle, ce qu'il faut entendre en un sens fort, c'est-à-dire qu'elle est engendrable et corruptible, tirée (*educta*) de la puissance de la matière.

Les expressions sont fortes, et tout le vocabulaire du « matérialisme alexandriste », tel qu'on le retrouvera ensuite jusqu'au XVI^e^ siècle, est déjà présent : l'âme est tirée de la matière et non pas induite en elle (serait-ce sous condition d'une « préparation ») ; elle est engendrable et non pas créable ; elle est corruptible et non pas éternelle ; elle est étendue. Ainsi, on interprète « forme matérielle » non pas seulement comme forme unie à une matière mais comme forme possédant les caractères de la matière, l'étendue étant le critère. Ces caractéristiques sont étendues à l'âme intellective ou la concernent tout entière dans le cas d'une doctrine stricte de l'unité de la forme substantielle.

2. Averroès : l'âme intellective est une forme immatérielle, inengendrée et incorruptible ; elle n'a pas les caractères de la matière, elle est séparée en un sens fort et n'est donc pas multipliée.

---

est considerare de anima secundum se ipsam, considerando passiones et praedicata sibi convenientia secundum se totum et non toti corpori » ; Jean Buridan, *Questions sur l'âme*, livre I, qu. 1, trad. J. Biard, Paris, Vrin, 2019 : « Aristote pense que, *bien que l'âme soit inséparable du corps et ne puisse exercer ses opérations sans corps*, il est cependant possible de considérer l'âme par elle-même, prenant en considération les propriétés et prédicats qui lui conviennent d'elle-même et non pas à tout le composé » — c'est moi qui souligne.

6 Voir J.-B. Brenet, « Alexandre d'Aphrodise ou le matérialiste malgré lui. La question de l'engendrement de l'intellect revue et corrigée par Averroès », dans P. J. J. M. Bakker (éd.), *Averroes' Natural Philosophy and its Reception in the Latin West*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2015, p. 37-67.

7 Voir Radulphus Brito. *Quaestiones in Aristotelis librum tertium de anima*, III, q. 5, ed. W. Fauser (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters, Neue Folge, 12), Münster i.W., Aschendorff, 1974, p. 145-149.

La conséquence en est que l'intellect n'est pas une forme inhérente, mais une forme qui assiste[8]. Cette forme qui assiste est indispensable pour l'opération de la pensée. L'intellect n'est pas séparé au sens où il serait ailleurs, mais il n'est pas soumis aux catégories du lieu et de l'étendue, il assiste n'importe quel homme « sans distance », *indistanter*[9].

3. « La vérité de notre foi catholique ». L'intellect est une forme inhérente mais non tirée de la matière ; créée et non engendrée de manière naturelle ; ne possédant pas les caractères d'une étant matériel.

Régulièrement, en d'autres endroits du traité, il rappellera que cette thèse, étant celle de la foi, doit être tenue pour vraie. Il lui arrive même de l'évoquer à titre d'argument (fournissant le moyen terme) dans ses argumentations.

En exposant les points communs et les différences entre ces opinions, Buridan présente assez longuement les raisons qui pourraient justifier que l'intellect ne soit pas une forme tirée de la matière et étendue comme elle. On y retrouve tous les arguments classiques, tant métaphysiques qu'épistémologiques, en faveur de l'immatérialité de l'intellect. Mais ensuite, on assiste à un renversement : il nous livre une longue justification possible de la position d'Alexandre.

Comment est exposée la position attribuée à Alexandre[10] ?

Alexandre nierait que l'intellect ne puisse pas être tiré de la puissance de la matière (qu'il puisse être une *forma educta*).

Il nierait qu'il y ait un intellect unique pour tous les hommes, par conséquent cela ne serait pas une objection qu'il soit multiplié du fait de son lien avec le corps.

Il nierait aussi son indivisibilité (qui au premier abord est contradictoire avec l'extension matérielle).

Il en résulte que certaines propriétés doivent être affirmée ou niées de façon solidaire :

> Il faut par conséquent noter, me semble-t-il, en faisant abstraction de la foi et de l'action surnaturelle, que la raison naturelle établirait que suivent formellement les uns des autres les six prédicats suivants, ou bien leurs opposés : être inhérent à la matière, être tiré de la puissance de la matière, être étendu par l'extension de la matière, être multiplié et non unique en différents corps séparés et distants, être engendré et être corruptible. Donc toutes ces propriétés sont posées par Alexandre à propos de l'intellect, et Averroès les nie toutes en même temps[11].

---

8 Buridan reprend donc le vocabulaire de l'averroïsme latin du XIV^e^ siècle, sans doute en référence tacite à Jean de Jandun. La distinction entre la forme informante et la forme assistante, esquissée par Siger de Brabant, a reçu avec Thomas Wylton (entre 1315 et 1317-1319) puis Jean de Jandun (en 1317-1319) une formulation canonique qui se maintiendra jusqu'au XVI^e^ siècle. Voir A. DE LIBERA, « Formes assistantes et formes inhérentes » ; J.-B. BRENET, *Les possibilités de jonction. Averroès - Thomas Wylton*, Berlin, Walter De Gruyter, 2013.

9 Voir BURIDAN, *Qu. sur l'âme*, III, qu. 3 et qu. 4.

10 Dans la question 3, elle est exposée de façon assez résumée, beaucoup moins précisément qu'elle ne l'était chez Jean de Jandun. Mais on peut compléter l'exposé par ce qui est dit dans la question suivante.

11 BURIDAN, *Qu. sur l'âme*, III, qu. 4 : « Unde notandum, ut mihi videtur, quod circumscripta fide et supernaturali actione, ratio naturalis dictaret in forma quod haec sex <se> consequi vel earum opposita, scilicet inhaerere materiae, esse eductum de potentia materiae, esse extensum extensione materiae, esse

Diverses conséquences de cette position sont tirées, dans la question 3 puis dans les suivantes.

En premier lieu, on peut estimer que les arguments d'Aristote, repris et amplifiés par Averroès, en faveur du caractère « sans mélange » (*inmixtum*), c'est-à-dire immatériel, de l'intellect ne sont pas nécessairement concluants (cette remarque porte donc déjà sur le statut épistémique de certaines thèses). L'argumentation repose en effet sur la comparaison entre d'une part le rapport de l'intellect à l'intelligible, d'autre part le rapport du sens au sensible : pour intelliger toutes les formes matérielles l'intellect devrait n'en posséder aucune, de même que le sens, pour recevoir telle qualité sensible (par exemple le chaud ou le froid) ne doit pas avoir cette qualité, du moins au même degré[12]. Or dès la question 2, Buridan refuse de généraliser ce raisonnement valable pour les sens externes aux autres puissances, y compris le sens commun et la cogitative. L'organe du sens commun, notamment, a des qualités corporelles qui ne sont pas celles de tel sens particulier. Buridan donne ici des détails physiologiques, insistant sur le fait que le cœur est très chaud, et qu'il peut cependant sentir la chaleur autant que le sens particulier du toucher. L'argument d'Aristote et d'Averroès en faveur de l'immatérialité n'est donc pas considéré comme concluant. Si l'appareil cognitif de l'homme se réduisait à des facultés matérielles, cela ne l'empêcherait pas *ipso facto* de saisir toutes les formes.

En deuxième lieu, Alexandre aurait assumé que l'intellect humain n'est pas perpétuel mais qu'il est engendrable et corruptible.

En troisième lieu, il accepterait une certaine dépendance envers une complexion de qualités corporelles, au point que si le sens commun ou l'imagination sont déréglés, l'intellect ne peut pas bien comprendre. Quant à l'argument selon lequel il intellige les plus hauts intelligibles sans en être affecté ou accablé, on répondrait qu'il les pense de façon discursive et non intuitive.

En quatrième lieu, on peut admettre qu'une faculté corporelle et matérielle intellige de façon universelle, et l'on invoque ici des exemples montrant que déjà l'appétit sensible est universel, comme pour le cheval qui a soif d'eau en général. Certes, on ne peut nier la différence entre puissances appétitives et puissances cognitives, mais cela suffit à montrer qu'une puissance matérielle peut être capable d'une certaine universalité[13].

---

multiplicatum et non unicum in diversis (*corr.* divisis) corporibus separatis et distantibus, esse genitum, et esse corruptibilem ; ergo Alexander haec omnia de intellectu posuit, et Averroes haec omnia simul negavit ».

12 Cf. *Ibid.*, III, q. 2. Buridan juge acceptable le raisonnement d'Aristote, mais puisqu'il n'est pas démonstratif, il n'est pas impossible de soutenir la conclusion inverse.

13 Les deux dernières précisions apportées sont moins importantes pour le statut même de l'intellect. (1) L'intellect intellige bien l'indivisible, mais cela ne prouve pas qu'il soit lui-même indivisible car il l'intellige sur un mode privatif (on pourrait renvoyer ici aux analyses du point, plus loin dans le livre III). (2) Enfin, il n'y a pas à proprement parler de réflexion de l'intellect sur soi ; ici encore on peut évoquer la *Métaphysique* où Buridan refuse d'appliquer à l'intellect ce terme provenant de la théorie de la vision à l'intellect, la « réflexion » n'est ici qu'un retour sur soi par la médiation d'un raisonnement.

En réalité, l'objectif principal est de caractériser le *régime du discours* qui sous-tend chacune de ces thèses (sa forme, ses présupposés, sa force contraignante…) par rapport aux autres discours possibles, et la *valeur épistémique* des thèses qui en résultent (évidence, vérité, nécessité, probabilité…).

Commençons par la thèse de la séparabilité : « Cette deuxième conclusion [est] absolument vraie »[14]. Mais de quelle vérité s'agit-il ? Pris dans ce contexte immédiat, l'adverbe « absolument » (*simpliciter*) évoque l'article 90 (191) des condamnations de 1277[15], visant Boèce de Dacie bien que celui-ci assimilât vérité de la foi et vérité absolue[16]. En même temps, pour Buridan une telle vérité absolue n'a aucune évidence — et dans cette mesure elle ne peut être sue scientifiquement[17].

Il ne s'agit pourtant pas en l'occurrence d'accepter une croyance immédiate ; il s'agit d'argument rationnels mais ceux-ci ne sont pas déduits de principes évidents. Comme on le lit dans la question 3 sur le livre III, les arguments ne sont pas démonstratifs parce qu'ils ne sont pas tirés de principes évidents si la foi est mise de côté[18]. C'est pourqoui ils sont qualifiés de « probables »[19], en un sens qui renvoie simplement au syllogisme dialectique, reposant sur des prémisses admises mais non connues par soi ni évidentes. Seule la foi garantit. L'évidence ne pourrait résulter ici que d'une intervention extraordinaire, miraculeuse, une « grâce spéciale passant outre le cours de la nature »[20]. Un certain nombre d'arguments sont certes apportés pour illustrer ou rendre plausible ce discours.

---

14 Buridan, *Qu. sur l'âme*, III, qu. 3 : « illa conclusio [est] simpliciter vera ».

15 *Articles condamnés*, 90 (191) : « Quod naturalis philosophus simpliciter debet negare mundi nouitatem, quia innititur causis et rationibus naturalibus », dans D. Piché, *La Condamnation parisienne de 1277*, Paris, Vrin, 1999, p. 106-107.

16 Voir Boethius Dacus. *De aeternitate mundi*, éd. N. J. Green-Pedersen (Corpus philosophorum danicorum medii aevi, VI/2), Hauniae, Typus Fr. Bagge, 1976, p. 351 : « Cum haec sit veritas christianae fidei et etiam veritas simpliciter » ; *L'Éternité du monde*, trad. C. Michon dans *Thomas d'Aquin et la controverse sur l'éternité du monde. Présentations et traductions sous la direction de Cyrille Michon*, Paris, GF Flammarion, 2004, p. 196. Voir aussi *a contrario* p. 198 : « Unde conclusio in qua naturalis dicit mundum et primum motum non esse novum, accepta absolute, falsa est, sed si referatur in rationes et principia ex quibus ipse eam concludit, ex illis sequitur » ; trad., p. 198.

17 On peut ici renvoyer à la définition de l'*habitus* de foi que Buridan donne ailleurs : *Quaestiones in duos Aristotelis libros Posteriorum Analyticorum*, I, 2 (transcr. inédite par H. Hubien) : « Nam fides est firmissimae et certissimae veritatis, et debet esse cum assensu firmissimo, sed non dicitur scientia, quia ille assensus non est per evidentiam » (Car la foi porte sur la vérité la plus ferme et la plus certaine, et doit être accompagnée de l'assentiment le plus ferme, mais elle n'est pas dite science, puisque cet assentiment ne se fait pas par évidence) ; voir J. Biard, *Science et nature. La théorie buridanienne du savoir*, Paris, Vrin, 2012, p. 25-26.

18 Voir Buridan, *Qu. sur l'âme*, III, qu. 3 : « quamvis […] rationes ad eam adductae sint probabiles, tamen non apparet mihi quod sint demonstrativae ex principiis, circumscripta fide, evidentiam habentibus » ; « bien que […] les arguments apportés en sa faveur soient probables, il ne me semble pas qu'ils soient démonstratifs, qu'ils résultent de principes ayant une évidence si la foi est mise à part ».

19 En fait, ce qualificatif est rarement appliqué à la position de la foi ; mais il l'est au moins une fois dans la question 3 : voir citation note précédente « bien que les arguments apportés en sa faveur soient probables, il ne me semble pas qu'ils soient démonstratifs ».

20 *Ibid.*, III, qu. 3 : « […] de gratia speciali et ultra communem cursum naturae […] ».

Mais il s'agit de phénomènes renvoyant à des faits miraculeux ou inexplicables, comme la bi-localisation du Christ.

Mais précisément parce que les prémisses ne sont pas évidentes et que les conclusions ne sont pas démontrées, on peut leur opposer d'autres raisonnements et notamment ceux qui défendent la position d'Alexandre : « Voici donc, me semble-t-il, comment Alexandre aurait répondu à ces arguments »[21]. La défense de la position alexandriste est raisonnable, et elle mobilise un certain nombre d'arguments que Buridan reprend explicitement à son compte en d'autres lieux.

Le statut d'un tel discours ne fait pas l'objet d'une qualification explicite dans la question 3, mais il apparaît clairement dans les questions suivantes qu'il relève de la « raison naturelle ». Ainsi la question 4, qui porte sur le statut de l'intellect comme forme inhérente, combine contre la position averroïste des arguments « selon la foi catholique » et des arguments « selon la raison naturelle » :

> Deuxièmement, cette conclusion est aussi à soutenir par des raisons naturelles, en faisant abstraction de la foi catholique, si bien qu'un philosophe païen la soutiendrait. Je le prouve car je crois qu'un philosophie païen soutiendrait l'opinion d'Alexandre, dont on parlera plus loin[22].

En réalité, le long développement que Buridan mène selon la raison naturelle, en faisant abstraction de toute donnée de foi ou de toute considération surnaturelle, ne se limite pas à des arguments « alexandristes », ce qui prouve que sa préoccupation n'est pas tant de défendre Alexandre que de préciser ce que l'on doit soutenir du point de vue de la raison naturelle[23].

En niant l'indivisibilité de l'intellect, la position d'Alexandre fait disparaître les absurdités qui résultaient de l'union d'un indivisible avec un sujet divisible, absurdités qui avaient été invoquées par Averroès afin de défendre sa thèse d'un intellect unique.

Une étape supplémentaire est franchie, lorsque l'on admet que *du point de vue de la raison naturelle*, la « perpétuité », donc l'immortalité de l'intellect impliquerait son unicité :

> […] si, faisant abstraction de la foi, quelqu'un procédait par la raison purement naturelle, sans infusion surnaturelle, cette raison établirait qu'il faut concéder les conditionnelles suivantes : « si l'intellect est perpétuel, il est unique pour tous les hommes », et « s'il n'est pas tiré de la matière il est unique ». Mais la foi, par une infusion spéciale et surnaturelle nie ces conditionnelles, posant qu'il est

---

21 *Ibid.*, III, qu. 3 : « Unde Alexander sic respondisset ad istas rationes ut puto ».

22 *Ibid.*, III, qu. 4 : « Secundo etiam dicta conclusio tenenda esset rationibus naturalibus, fide catholica circumscripta, ita quod philosophus paganus teneret eam. Probo, quia ego puto quod philosophus paganus teneret opinionem Alexandri, de qua dicetur postea ».

23 Cf. *Ibid.*, III, qu. 5 : « ratio naturalis nostra dictaret quod intellectus humanus esset eductus de potentia materiae et generabilis et corruptibilis, ex quo deberet concludi multitudo » ; « notre raison naturelle prescrirait que l'intellect humain soit tiré de la puissance de la matière, et serait engendrable et corruptible, d'où l'on devrait conclure à une multitude d'intellects ».

multiplié et que cependant il est perpétuel du côté du le futur, et qu'il n'est pas tiré de la puissance de la matière[24].

Comment dès lors qualifier la position d'Averroès ? Dans la question 4, les arguments du Commentateur aussi ont été dits « probables ». C'est le cas de la thèse selon laquelle aucune forme n'est inhérente à la matière si elle n'est pas tirée de la puissance de la matière, ou que ce qui est perpétuel n'est pas multipliable par la multiplication de choses corruptibles

Si donc on fait un bilan provisoire sur ce problème, on pourra dire

– que le dispositif topique des réponses possibles se répartit ici en trois positions : la foi catholique, Averroès et Alexandre ;
– que la première est « absolument vraie » mais non évidente ; les deux autres sont probables. Mais il ne s'agit pas simplement d'un statut « inférieur » car du point de vue rationnel ou naturel, elles sont mieux établies ; seule l'acceptation de choses qui échappent au cours de la nature permet de croire en la première position.
– Buridan tient-il pour autant la balance égale entre ces deux positions ? Non, puisque c'est Alexandre qui est le représentant privilégié de la « raison naturelle », alors même que la stratégie discursive de Buridan dans toute son œuvre est de se placer dans le cadre du « cours commun de la nature ».

Variations sur un thème alexandriste

Comme l'a montré Olaf Pluta, ce schéma est reproduit par plusieurs cóntemporains ou successeurs de Jean Buridan[25]. Mais la reprise d'un telle configuration doctrinale ne se fait pas de façon homogène.

On trouve quelques reprises quasi identiques. C'est le cas du *Tractatus de anima* de Pierre d'Ailly, sans doute écrit une vingtaine d'années après la *tertia lectura* de Buridan. Son caractère assez sommaire laisse entendre qu'il expose des positions bien connues. On trouve exactement les mêmes formules, mais simplement sans les argumentations développées par Buridan. Sont présentées trois opinions *magis famosae* (l'expression est celle de Buridan) l'une d'Alexandre, l'autre du Commentateur, la troisième « quare non est tamquam opinio tenendam sed tamquam fides firma »[26].

---

24 *Ibid.*, III, qu. 5 : « […] si fide circumscripta aliquis procederet ratione pure naturali sine supernaturali infusione, illa ratio dictaret istas conditionales esse concedendas : "si intellectus est perpetuus, ipse est unicus omnium hominum", et "si non est eductus de potentia materiae, ipse est unicus". Sed fides ex speciali et supernaturali infusione negat istas conditionales, ponendo quod est multiplicatus, cum tamen sit perpetuus a parte post, et non sit eductus de potentia materiae ».

25 Cf. Pluta, *Kritik der Unsterblichkeitsdoktrin* ; Pluta évoque davantage d'auteurs que je n'en mentionne ici.

26 Petrus de Alliaco. *Tractatus de anima*, c. 6, ed. O. Pluta, in *Id.*, *Die philosophische Psychologie des Peter von Ailly*, Amsterdam, Verlag Grüner, 1987, p. 34. Buridan disait « quam debemus firmiter tenere » ; la formule complète de Pierre d'Ailly se retrouvera (p.208) chez Laurent de Lindores.

De même chez Marsile d'Inghen, dont le texte est plus détaillé, les trois opinions sont exposées sous la forme qui semble devenue canonique. Marsile commence toutefois par poser l'indivisibilité puis la perpétuité de l'intellect. Puis il poursuit par une autre conclusion principale :

> en parlant de manière purement naturelle il ne faudrait pas concéder que l'intellect humain soit indivisible. Telle est la conclusion d'Alexandre[27].

Ensuite, il développe assez longuement les arguments en faveur de cette position. La troisième conclusion principale est celle de la foi catholique, qui ne peut être prouvée rationnellement[28]. Enfin, selon la lumière naturelle, l'opinion d'Alexandre est plus probable que celle d'Averroès[29].

Mais chez d'autres auteurs, une fois tracé un cadre identique, les réponses varient quelque peu. Ainsi, Nicole Oresme adopte bien une tripartition similaire, et propose lui aussi une caractérisation épistémique de chacune[30]. Pourtant, il y a des nuances. L'opinion d'Alexandre, présentée en premier, peut être réfutée par des arguments développés par ailleurs en faveur du caractère indivisible de l'âme. Mais ceux-ci sont seulement probables et non démonstratifs. Ensuite, en dehors de la position de la foi, la thèse d'Alexandre est la plus probable, beaucoup plus que celle du Commentateur, dont certaines conséquences sont *inopinabilia*. Cependant Oresme prendre clairement position en faveur de la position de la foi, qualifiée d'*opinio media*, et il admet qu'on peut la défendre par des arguments qui sont *bene probabiles*, là où Buridan se contentait presque d'une affirmation de principe[31].

Le texte de Laurent de Lindores, quant à lui, recteur de St. Andrews, est à certains égards mimétique de celui de Buridan, mais il s'en écarte subrepticement. Il reprend lui aussi la tripartition devenue canonique avec des caractérisations identiques, à la fois du contenu et du statut général. Conformément à la rupture opérée par Buridan et Oresme, et à la différence de Raoul le Breton ou de Jean de

---

27 Marsilius ab Inghen. *Questiones in libros de anima*, III, qu. 3, édition partielle in Pluta, *Kritik der Unsterblichkeitsdoktrin*, p. 99 : « loquendo pure naturaliter non debet esse concedendum quod intellectus humanus sit indivisibilis. Ista conclusio est Alexandri » (c'est moi qui traduis).

28 *Ibid.*, p. 100 : « Illa conclusio creditur fide, quia non potest probari ratione naturali ».

29 *Ibid.*, p. 100 : « Simpliciter loquendo in lumine naturali probabilior est opinio Alexandri quam Commentatoris ».

30 Nicolas Oresme. *Quaestiones in Aristotelis de anima*, III, qu. 4, éd. B. Patar, Louvain-la-Neuve-Louvain-Paris, Éditions de l'Institut supérieur de Philosophie-Éditions Peeters, 1995, p. 335. Rappelons que les questions de chronologie relative entre Buridan et Oresme ne sont pas claires. La seule chose dont on est sûr c'est que les *Questions sur l'âme* d'Oresme sont postérieures à 1347 et très probablement antérieures à 1356 ; mais rien n'atteste qu'elles soient postérieures à la *tertia lectura* de Buridan, c'est même probablement l'inverse. On ne saurait toutefois en inférer une quelconque dépendance puisque Buridan a donné des lectures antérieures et que, de plus, certaines questions se retrouvent dans les commentaires de la *Physique* pour lesquels, là aussi, la chronologie relative entre les différentes lectures est particulièrement complexe.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 335 et surtout p. 338.

Jandun, c'est la position d'Alexandre qui, « selon la voie philosophique » est « la plus probable »[32].

Cependant, il introduit une notion absente en tant que telle chez Buridan : celle de « lumière naturelle ». Cette notion est importante dans un certain nombre de commentaires sur le *Livre des Sentences*, notamment celui de Pierre d'Ailly, dans un contexte au premier abord très différent (celui de la théologie et non pas de la psychologie philosophique), mais également lié à une réflexion sur le probable[33]. Elle apparaissait également dans les *Questions sur les livres De l'âme* de Marsile d'Inghen, simplement comme synonyme de « raison naturelle ». Chez Laurent de Lindores, en revenche, la lumière naturelle est définie comme « la vérité que quelqu'un peut atteindre par ses propres forces sans concours spécial de la cause première »[34]. On se situe donc bien dans le champ de la raison naturelle, mais il s'agit d'une vérité, de sorte que tout ce qui serait faux ne peut pas relever de la lumière naturelle. De là résulte un écart entre la « lumière naturelle » et la « voie des philosophes » qui ont pu défendre des positions fausses.

Cela concerne directement notre problème, puisque selon la lumière naturelle, on ne doit pas concéder la proposition « l'intellect humain est corruptible ». Laurent justifie même cela en posant qu'elle n'est pas connue par soi, mais pas non plus déduite des principes de la science naturelle — ce que, au contraire, semblait admettre Buridan.

En revanche, selon la « voie philosophique », nous retrouvons les deux opinions d'Averroès et d'Alexandre, et « en parlant de façon purement philosophique » c'est à nouveau la position d'Alexandre qui est jugée la plus probable[35]. Il ne faut pas croire cependant que le point de vue de la lumière naturelle conduit à argumenter contre la position philosophique. L'idée de Laurent est finalement que la question excède la lumière naturelle : « Ce sujet excède la connaissance de la lumière naturelle, et donc celui qui se tient seulement dans la lumière naturelle, peut rationnellement se dispenser de répondre à ce sujet »[36].

Donc on a bien la « vérité de la foi », et deux positions philosophiques dont l'une, celle d'Alexandre, est plus probable que l'autre. Seulement celui qui se tient dans la lumière naturelle s'interdit de conclure contre la vérité de la foi, quoi que la

---

32 Voir Laurent de Lindores. *Questiones super librum De anima*, dans O. Pluta, Th. Dewender, « Lawrence of Lindores on Immortality. An Edition with Analysis of Four of his *Quaestiones in Aristotelis libros De anima* », in *Bochumer Philosophisches Jahrbuch für Antike und Mittelalter*, 2 (1997), p. 187-242, ici p. 214. Laurent de Lindores devait constituer avec Buridan lui-même une des références de Benoit Hesse qui commente le *De anima* à Cracovie dans les années 1420.

33 Voir J. Biard, « Évidence et raisons probables : Pierre d'Ailly et la scientificité de la théologie », in J. Pelletier, M. Roques (éd.), *The Language of Thought in Late Medieval Philosophy. Essays in Honor of Claude Panaccio*, Cham, Springer, 2017, p. 397-416.

34 Laurentius de Lindores. *Quaestiones super librum De anima*, p. 207 : « Lumen naturale dicitur esse veritas, ad quam quis potest attingere suis propriis viribus sine speciali concursu primi esse ».

35 *Ibid.*, p. 213, p. 214.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 212 : « Ista materia excedit notitiam luminis naturalis, et ergo stans praecise in lumine naturali potest rationaliter se ipsum excusare de responsione ad istam materiam ».

raison semble déduire de ce point. Cette suspension du jugement[37] va au-delà de la position selon laquelle la question de la permanence de l'intellect, comme celle de la séparabilité, seraient des questions dialectiques, au sens où elles ne seraient susceptibles que de développements probables et non démonstratifs[38]. Il ne va pas toutefois jusqu'à estimer que la position d'Alexandre peut être invalidée au moyen de raisons empruntées aux Anciens, contrairement à ce que faisait Nicole Oresme[39].

Est-ce à dire que le schéma buridanien est progressivement remis en cause ou dénaturé ? Non, et l'on en peut en donner deux témoignages, qui chacun à leur manière s'éloignent de la formulation canonique de la topique buridanienne, mais radicalisent le propos.

Le premier que l'on peut évoquer (trop rapidement au vu de la complexité de ses textes) est Blaise de Parme. C'est dans la question 2 sur le livre III, « Utrum possit persuaderi quod intellectus humanus sit denudatus ab omni qualitate », que l'on retrouve notre schéma[40]. Au cours de son exposé, Blaise est conduit à évoquer comme difficulté « est-ce que l'intellect est la forme substantielle de l'homme ? » Et il rappelle que dans cette difficulté il y a trois opinions. L'une est celle d'Alexandre. La description est identique à celle que nous avons vue dans les autres textes. Blaise précise : « On ne soutient pas cette opinion car elle est contre la foi »[41]. Mais on doit noter qu'un argument est ajouté, et il concerne la rémunération des mérites et le châtiment des méchants. La deuxième opinion est celle du Commentateur. Elle non plus ne doit pas être soutenue, en raison du même argument. La troisième opinion est celle de l'Église. Cette opinion, bien qu'elle ne puisse être conclue de façon démonstrative[42], doit être soutenue par n'importe quel fidèle. En somme, nous avons la tripartition canonique, l'affirmation du caractère non démontrable de la vérité de foi, mais sous une forme minimale, et le rejet des deux autres, sans grande précision sur le statut. Pour finir, Blaise se rallie ostensiblement à la position de la foi[43].

Du point de vue de la question qui nous intéresse, le passage est à la fois surprenant et décevant. Pour cerner davantage la position de Blaise, il faut se tourner vers la question 8 sur le livre I qui demande « si l'âme intellective peut être séparée

---

37 Même si l'adage selon lequel le vrai doit consoner avec le vrai n'est pas ici formulé, il est sans doute ici le fondement implicite.

38 C'est ainsi Jack Zupko que résume finalement la position de Buridan. La thèse selon laquelle la question de la mortalité serait un « problème neutre » remonte en vérité à Scot.

39 Voir Nicolas Oresme. *Quaestiones in Aristotelis De anima*, III, qu. 3, p. 327-331. Pour défendre la thèse selon laquelle l'intellect est non-mélangé, *immixtus*, Oresme s'appuie principalement sur Aristote et sur Averroès, mais évoque aussi Macrobe, Ptolémée et Anaxagore.

40 Question partiellement éditée par G. Federici Vescovini, *Le 'Quaestiones de anima' di Biagio Pelacani da Parma*, Firenze, L. Olschki editore, 1974, p. 124-132.

41 Blasius Pelacani de Parma. *Quaestiones de anima*, III, qu. 2, éd. Federici Vescovini, p. 129 : « Ista opinio non tenetur quia est contra fidem ».

42 Les deux manuscrits sont à l'évidence fautifs car il manque un « non », ce qui rendrait le texte incohérent : « Quae opinio, licet <non> possit demonstrative concludi, tenenda est tamen a quolibet fideli » (Ms. *Vat. Chigi O IV 41*, f. 210rb ; Napoli, Bib. naz. VIII g 4, f. 162v ; éd. Vescovini, *Le 'Quaestiones de anima'*, p. 130).

43 Blasius Pelacani. *Quaestiones de anima*, p. 131 : « His tamen opinionibus visis teneatur opinio fidei ut valeamus dicere una cum Ecclesia nec bonum irremuneratum nec malum impunitum ».

du corps »[44]. L'un des articles oppose deux déterminations possibles, l'une *ut fidelis*, l'autre *secundum scholas philosophorum*, le philosophe étant « disposé par la seule lumière naturelle » (*habituatus lumine solo naturali*). Or ce passage repose sur l'examen de ce qui est connu par soi (*per se notum*). On a donc bien affaire ici encore à une analyse métadiscursive centrée que le caractère épistémique des énoncés. Toute une série d'énoncés concernant la séparabilité ou la séparation à venir de l'âme sont dits n'être pas *per se notum*, ou n'être pas évidents. Le nom d'Alexandre n'est pas prononcé, mais la description est celle qui est devenue classique depuis le XIII^e^ siècle. Ainsi, dans le cadre d'une réflexion sur le caractère non connu par soi de certains énoncés, on peut voir que les philosophes, procédant selon la seule lumière naturelle, n'ont pas à admettre que Dieu séparera l'âme du corps et la conservera (conclusion 5), ou (douzième et dernière conclusion de la série) « que l'âme intellective de l'homme soit tirée de la puissance de la matière, engendrable et corruptible, n'importe qui doit clairement le concéder » (sous-entendu du point de vue des philosophes)[45]. C'est donc de fait une conclusion alexandriste qui s'impose du point de vue philosophique en face de la position du « fidèle ». De ce point de vue, ce n'est sans doute pas un hasard si les arguments apportés concernent moins la théologie naturelle que la morale ou la religion : il s'agit de la rémunération des mérites.

Mais c'est jusqu'à la fin du XVI^e^ siècle que le schéma mis en place produit ses effets. En dépit d'un style différent, c'est le même « triangle des Bermudes » que nous pouvons retrouver avec Pietro Pomponazzi. Pour le mesurer, il convient de ne pas se tourner tout de suite vers le *De immortalitate anime* mais vers la *Quaestio de immortalitate* de 1504[46], donc un texte antérieur au Concile de Latran. Dans cette question, comme dans les fragments de cours de 1514-1515[47], Pomponazzi esquisse bien une tripartition des réponses possibles, référées comme dans la topique buridanienne à Alexandre, Averroès et à la foi catholique.

Dans ce texte comme dans les leçons plus tardives, *la thèse mortaliste* est immédiatement référée à Alexandre, ainsi qu'aux Épicuriens[48]. Pour parler

---

44 *Ibid.*, I, qu. 8, p. 79. Pour la mise en ligne avec quelques corrections et surtout un plan détaillé de l'argumentation, voir URL : https://bdeparme.hypotheses.org.

45 *Ibid.*, I, qu. 8, p. 79 : « quod anima intellectiva hominis sit educta de potentia materiae, generabilis et corruptibilis, habet quilibet de plano concedere ».

46 Petrus Pomponatius. *Quaestio de immortalitate animae*, dans P. O. Kristeller, « Two Unpublished Questions on the Soul by Pietro Pomponazzi », in *Medievalia et humanistica* fasc. IX (1955), p. 76-101, rééd. in *Id.*, *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters*, t. III, Roma, Edizione di storia e letteratura, 1993, p. 359-392. L'édition de Kristeller se base sur le Ms. Napoli, Bibl. Naz. *VIII D 81.*

47 Voir l'édition électronique par B. Mojsisch : *Fragmenta super libros Aristotelis de anima*, 1514-1515, et *Quaestiones super libros de anima*, 1519-1520, ed. 2012,
URL : http://www.hs-augsburg.de/~harsch/Chronologia/Lspost15/Pomponatius/pom_intr.html.

48 Petrus Pomponatius. *Questio de immortalitate animae*, in Kristeller, *Studies in Renaissance Thought*, p. 370 : « Queritur an virtus intellectiva sit immortalis, quatenus sonare videntur verba Phylosophi, an sit mortalis, quemadmodum alii voluerunt, sicuti Alexander et Epicureorum secta. Hec questio pro qualibet sui parte habet defensores maximos, et rationes cum auctoritatibus fortissimis » ; voir p. 372-373: « Utraque istarum opinionum […] habet defensores excellentissimos ».

d'Alexandre, Pomponazzi utilise des sources multiples. En premier lieu, c'est important, il cite souvent Thomas d'Aquin, y compris parfois le *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*[49] ; il est donc toujours dépendant, au moins partiellement, de la description de la pensée d'Alexandre fournie par Averroès et reprise par Thomas. Mais alors que les Latins ne connaissaient, outre ces sources indirectes, que le *De intellectu* dont l'authenticité n'est pas assurée et qui en tout cas présente quelques divergences avec le traité *De l'âme*[50], en 1495 est parue l'*Enarratio de anima ex Aristotelis institutione*, traduction latine par Jérôme Donat du traité *De l'âme* d'Alexandre, portant sur le même sujet que le traité d'Aristote et fortement inspiré de ce dernier[51]. Pomponazzi se réfère à Alexandre de façon plus informée que les auteurs du milieu du XIV^e^ siècle. S'il utilise souvent Thomas d'Aquin il utilise aussi dès 1504 l'*Enarratio de anima* qu'il cite sous le nom de *Paraphrasis*. Ainsi, lorsqu'il renvoie aux arguments en faveur de la mortalité de l'âme, il mentionne le chapitre 3 de la *Paraphrasis*[52]. Il montre même comment l'on pourrait répondre aux objections qui avait été faites à ce propos à la position alexandriste au sujet de la possibilité de la connaissance universelle.

La thèse de l'immortalité peut, quant à elle, être soutenue de deux points de vue : celui des chrétiens et celui d'Averroès. Dans la *Quaestio*, la *théorie chrétienne* est très brièvement exposée et renvoyée à un pur article de foi, la foi étant comme telle *firmior et efficacior ratio*[53]. On peut tenter de l'appuyer aussi par quelques raisonnements empruntés à Thomas et au *De anima* d'Avicenne, quoique l'on puisse formuler des objections, notamment sur une base alexandriste, contre la dualité substantielle.

Quelle est maintenant le statut de la théorie d'Averroès ? À cette époque elle est mise en avant comme la véritable interprétation d'Aristote[54]. Pomponazzi a d'ailleurs précédemment rejeté l'idée scotiste selon laquelle pour Aristote la question

---

49 Voir PETRUS POMPONATIUS, *Fragmenta super libros de anima Aristotelis*, éd. B. MOJSISCH, L. III, qu. « Utrum animam sit mortalis », § 62,
URL: http://www.hs-augsburg.de/~harsch/Chronologia/Lspost15/Pomponatius/pom_froo.html.

50 Voir la brève mise au point des traducteurs français, dans ALEXANDRE D'APHRODISE, *De l'âme*, texte grec traduit et annoté par M. BERGERON et R. DUFOUR, Paris, Vrin, 2008, « Introduction » p. 53-54, notamment note 1 p. 54.

51 Sur ce texte, voir ALEXANDER APHRODISIENSIS. *Enarratio de anima ex Aristotelis institutione*, übersetzt von Hieronymus Donatus. Neudruck der ersten Ausgabe, Brescia, 1495, mit einer Einleitung von E. KESSLER, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, Frommann-Holzboog, 2008. Alexandre a aussi écrit un commentaire sur le traité d'Aristote, mais seuls quelques fragments ont été conservés.

52 Voir POMPONATIUS. *Quaestio de immortalitate animae*, in KRISTELLER, *Studies in Renaissance Thought*, p. 372.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 372 : « Dicit Augustinus quod Christus in resurrectione ostendit animam esse immortalem, et hec est firmior et efficacior ratio que adduci potest pro parte illa ».

54 *Ibid.*, p 373 : « Dico quod Averroes optime ipsam [= opinio Alexandri] improbavit, et credo etiam quod opinio Averrois expresse fuerit opinio Aristotelis » ; *Ibid.*, p. 380 : « De opinione autem Averrois mihi videtur quod fuerit opinio Aristotelis » — en vérité, Pomponazzi entre davantage dans les détails en distinguant deux tendances parmi les averroïstes, mais nous ne pouvons détailler cela ici.

de l'immortalité serait un problème indécidable[55]. Pomponazzi finit cependant par rejeter l'opinion d'Averroès (et par conséquent celle d'Aristote) : « Mais que chacun dise ce qu'il veut, moi j'abhorre davantage l'opinion d'Averroès que le diable »[56]. C'est pourquoi il exprime à cette époque une *grande perplexité*[57].

Pour résumer, quel est le régime discursif de ces théories et le statut épistémique de leurs conclusions ? D'un côté, la position des théologiens et des Chrétiens est à croire fermement — appuyée sur la foi mais aussi sur quelques raisonnements, empruntés à Thomas et au *De anima* d'Avicenne. Toutefois, les objections restent fortes contre la dualité substantielle, et elles touchent à la fois Platon, Averroès et les Chrétiens. D'un autre côté, pour des raisons à la fois professionnelles et doctrinales, Pomponazzi se situe dans le cadre d'une interprétation d'Aristote. Et en 1504 Pomponazzi juge qu'Averroès représente sur ce point l'interprétation correcte d'Aristote, quoique celle-ci soit absurde et doive être rejetée.

À la fin cependant, il admet que la position d'Alexandre peut être soutenue d'un point de vue naturel : « en s'en tenant à des principes purement naturels, il me semble que l'opinion d'Alexandre peut être soutenue »[58].

Ainsi, quoique avec mesure, la position alexandriste est jugée rationnelle ; celle d'Averroès, bien que conforme à Aristote, est à rejeter fermement ; quant à la position des Chrétiens, elle est vraie mais peu argumentée rationnellement. Nous sommes donc rejetés de l'un à l'autre de ces trois pôles, sans parvenir à une situation stable et satisfaisante. Kristeller avait parlé de propension pour l'Alexandrisme, dès cette époque[59] ; Antonino Poppi avait minimisé l'évolution ultérieure et souligné qu'Alexandre est déjà présenté et discuté avec sympathie[60]. Quoi qu'il en soit, cette doctrine paraît la plus fondée et correspond le mieux à l'expérience ; le seul obstacle à son adoption qui soit rencontré à l'époque est la difficulté apparente à rendre compte de l'aspect universalisant de l'intellect humain.

Un tel dispositif va se maintenir jusqu'en 1414-1415 et c'est seulement dans le texte de 1516 que Pomponazzi opère un changement qui lui permet de reformuler les enjeux. Le dispositif est bien connu : c'est alors l'interprétation d'Alexandre qui est jugée être la bonne lecture d'Aristote ; Averroès et le platonisme sont rejetés ; et pour finir, une position qui défendrait à la fois l'immortalité et l'individualité, si elle est exposée à partir de thèses thomistes, n'est pas démontrable et repose sur la foi.

---

55 *Ibid.*, p. 373 : « Que autem fuit opinio Aristotelis ? Dicit Johannes Scotus quod non se determinavit Aristoteles. […] Hoc autem, ut ipse ait, est problema ad utramque partem probabile. […] Ego tamen dico […] quod falsum est quod ipse dicit […] ».

56 *Ibid.*, p. 380 : « Dicat autem quisque quicquid vult, ego magis abhorreo opinionem Averrois quam diabolum ».

57 *Ibid.*, p. 380 : « remoto lumine fidei ego valde perplexus sum in materia ista ».

58 *Ibid.*, p. 384 : « stando in puris naturalibus mihi videtur quod opinio Alexandri sit substentabilis ».

59 P. O. Kristeller, *Aristotelismo e sincretismo nel pensiero di Pietro Pomponazzi*, Padova, Antenore, 1983.

60 A. Poppi, « Ci fu una evoluzione in senso alessandrista nel pensiero del Pomponazzi? », in *Rinascimento*, 8 (1968), p. 121-168, rééd. dans *Id.*, *Saggi sul pensiero inedito di Pietro Pomponazzi*, Padova, Antenore, 1970, p. 27-92 ; il va jusqu'à écrire qu'on ne peut pas parler d'évolution entre 1504 et 1516 (p. 90). C'est sans doute excessif car le statut de l'Alexandrisme est considérablement renforcé par l'affirmation qu'il est la véritable interprétation d'Aristote.

La référence ultime à Scot, assigne en fin de compte à la question controversée de la mortalité un statut purement dialectique, mais il ne s'agit plus mettre en balance l'interprétation averroïste et l'interprétation alexandriste d'Aristote, il s'agit d'admettre que le problème peut être défendu de différentes parts selon le point de départ : celui de la foi, représenté par Thomas, ou celui de la raison naturelle, représenté par Aristote interprété par Alexandre.

Défendue lors des polémiques qui vont suivre (dans l'*Apologie* et dans le *Defensorium*), cette convergence entre Aristote, Alexandre, et la raison naturelle, sera dès lors sans cesse justifiée et explicitée. En témoigne par exemple en 1521 une question sur la mortalité qui fait partie d'un cours sur le *De partibus animalium*[61].

En comparaison de la matrice buridanienne, un certain nombre de glissements se sont opérés. Je soulignerai deux différences.

En premier lieu, la question aristotélicienne de la séparabilité, redoublée chez les Latins de l'interrogation sur le statut de forme inhérente attribuable à l'âme (cette dernière dimension ayant fait l'objet de la décision du Concile de Vienne en 1311-1312), a laissé place à celle, plus proprement chrétienne, de la mortalité. Cette question a pris de l'importance à la fin du XV^e^ et au début du XVI^e^ siècle, et dans son exposition de 1514-1515, Pomponazzi en fait à plusieurs reprises l'objet principal de ses traités[62].

En second lieu, la fonction assignée à Alexandre dans la topique buridanienne se trouve redoublée par de nouveaux éléments. Dès les années 1460 à Florence, Argyropulous expose la « doctrine téméraire » d'Alexandre en se fondant sur des textes grecs jusque-là inconnus ou inutilisés. Marsile Ficin, dans sa *Théologie platonicienne de l'immortalité des âmes*, publiée en 1482, exposant les différents commentateurs grecs, évoque à plusieurs reprises l'exégèse d'Alexandre[63]. Surtout, quelques années plus tôt, il avait divisé les Péripatéticiens en deux sectes, celle des averroïstes et celles alexandristes, les deux ruinant la religion[64]. Bien évidemment la parution en 1495 d'une traduction de *l'Ennaratio* par Jérôme Donat ne fait que relancer l'intérêt

---

61 Voir Petrus Pomponatius. *Expositio super primo et secundo De partibus animalium*, 8^e^ leçon, éd. S. Perfetti, Firenze, L. Olschki, 2004, 8^e^ leçon.

62 Voir Pomponatius. *Fragmenta super libros Aristotelis de anima*, liber II, t. 11, §78 : « Dico quod nihil est magis desideratum in toto hoc libro, immo nec in tota hac scientia, quam scire utrum anima sit mortalis vel non ». Le problème est repris et traité en détail dans le livre III, « Utrum anima sit mortalis vel non ». Dans la question « An anima nostra sit mortalis », extraite du cours sur le *De partibus animalium* de 1521, Pomponazzi réaffirme le caractère central de cette interrogation : « nihil possumus intelligere quam intelligere an anima nostra sit mortalis vel non » (Pomponatius. *Expositio super primo et secundo De partibus animalium*, éd. Perfetti, p. 218).

63 Dans Marsilius Ficinus. *Theologia Platonica de immortalitate animarum*, éd. R. Marcel, in *Id.*, *Théologie Platonicienne. De l'immortalité des âmes,* Texte critique établi et traduit par R. Marcel, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, rééd. 2007, livre XV, chap. 1^er^, Marsile Ficin rejette l'interprétation d'Aristote par Alexandre : « Alexandre d'Aphrodise semble avoir faussé la pensée d'Aristote sur l'âme quand il affirme qu'Aristote a cru l'âme mortelle » (p. 9) ; mais il évoque régulièrement son interprétation : voir chap. XI, p. 64, chap. XII, p. 70 *sqq*.

64 Marsilius Ficinus. *Opera, & quæ hactenus extitere, & quae in lucem nunc primum prodiere omnia, omnium artium & scientiarum, majorumque facultatum multifaria cognitione refertissima,* I, Bâle, ex officina Henricpetrina, 1576, I, p. 872 (*Epistola Ioanni Pannonio*) : « Totus enim terrarum orbis a Peripateticis

pour Alexandre et les débats interprétatifs[65]. À Padoue, des discussions animées confrontent la lecture averroïste et la lecture alexandriste d'Aristote de façon bien plus détaillée qu'on ne le faisait au milieu du XIV^e siècle. C'est alors que l'Église s'en émeut. Mais elle envoie ses premières flèches contre Averroès. Déjà en 1489 l'évêque de Padoue avait interdit que l'on soutienne ouvertement la théorie de l'unité de l'intellect. Cependant, le contexte fait éclater le face à face entre la position catholique et l'averroïsme, pour faire entrer dans le jeu l'interprétation d'Alexandre. Quelqu'un comme Agostino Nifo, s'appuyant sur la traduction de Donat, discute longuement, par exemple dans son *De intellectu* de 1503, la justesse de la présentation faite par Averroès de la pensée d'Alexandre. Ce sont ces nouvelles données que manifestent les développements et évolutions de Pomponazzi dans ses différentes études de l'âme.

La séquence retracée ici (séquence qui n'est d'ailleurs pas fermée *a parte post*) s'insère dans d'autres séquences, peut-être plus larges, comme l'histoire sur la longue durée de la double vérité telle qu'elle est étudiée par Luca Bianchi. Mais elle a deux spécificités.

En premier lieu, il est certes question de vérité, plus précisément de la vérité de la foi. Mais de ce point de vue, du moins au XIV^e siècle, le débat est assez pauvre (souvent réduit à une affirmation de principe). Le problème réel, qui est articulé à celui de la vérité mais ne s'y résout pas, me semble au-delà du vrai et du faux : c'est celui du régime discursif de chacune des trois thèses-types, dont la configuration ou topique est énoncée avec toute sa force philosophique et de manière quasi définitive par Jean Buridan. Ce glissement vers un examen du régime discursif est sans doute à l'origine l'effet d'un changement opéré par Duns Scot, et ultérieurement généralisé. À propos de la résurrection des corps, impliquant de l'immortalité de l'âme, Scot a distingué la question de la vérité (qui est pour lui une donnée de foi) et la possibilité de démonstration par voie rationnelle[66]. Par la suite, l'examen de l'immortalité portera principalement sur les conditions de démontrabilité ainsi que sur le caractère probable de certains énoncés. La démarche marque profondément le siècle, au-delà des théologiens qui débattent avec Scot, et elle débordera même la seule question de l'immortalité de l'âme. Ici donc, la critériologie mise en œuvre pour caractériser les énoncés et les raisonnements repose sur les idées de « probabilité », elle-même susceptible de multiples variations, de « démontrabilité » et de « réfutabilité », et elle est élaborée du point de vue de la raison naturelle ou de la philosophie, c'est-à-dire non pas indépendamment des prescriptions universitaires ou ecclésiastiques

---

occupatus in duas plurimum divisus est sectas, Alexandrinam et Averroicam. Illi quidem intellectum nostrum esse mortalem existimunt, hi vero unicum esse contendunt. Utrique religionem omnem funditus aeque tollunt ».

65 Sur cette histoire, voir E. Kessler, « Einleitung », in Alexander Aphrodisiensis. *Enarratio de anima*, p. V-CVI : « Alexander von Aphrodisias Exeget der aristotelischen Psychologie bis zum Ende des 16. Jahrhuderts ».

66 Voir Johannes Duns Scotus. *Ordinatio*, IV, dist. XLIII, qu. 2, *Liber quartus, a distinctione quadragesima tertia usque ad quadragesimam nonam*, studio et cura Commissionis Scotisticae, Civitas vaticana, Typis Vaticanis, 2013, p. 13.

(qu'elles ne peuvent évidemment pas ignorer), mais de manière totalement décentrée par rapport à elles.

En second lieu, une place centrale est assignée à l'Alexandrisme. Certes une évolution se dessine, depuis l'image d'Alexandre reçue d'Averroès et de Thomas, jusqu'à une meilleure connaissance à la fin du XVI^e siècle (sans toutefois remettre en cause le cœur de la lecture qui en est faite), en passant par la mise sur le même plan, ou au même degré de dangerosité, d'Alexandre et Averroès par Marsile Ficin, puis par l'évêque de Padoue. Mais l'évolution de Pomponazzi, fondée sur des arguments qui mériteraient d'être étudiés en détail, nous montre dans le cadre de cette séquence la persistance d'une voie alexandriste. Et c'est cette voie qui incarne au mieux ce qui est défendable selon les principes de la raison naturelle.

AMOS CORBINI

"Alexander of Aphrodisias" in the Medieval Latin Tradition of the *Posterior Analytics*

Some Remarks

The complex task of reconstructing the remaining witnesses of Alexander of Aphrodisias' lost commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* has been masterfully carried out by Paul Moraux[1]. Moraux found 36 fragments of the commentary on the first book of Aristotle's work and 15 on the second book, and he showed that an anonymous commentary on the second book published by Wallies contains material that certainly derived from Alexander, even though it probably came from a florilegium and not from the original text in its complete redaction[2]. The research carried out by Moraux to create this complex reconstruction also allowed him to state that, even though Eustratius probably had a complete copy of the commentary in twelfth-century Constantinople[3], this situation should be considered as something rather exceptional because in the sixth century Philoponus shows a knowledge of Alexander's work which was probably mostly second-hand[4] and, in general, it would appear that from a relatively early period the work circulated in the form of extracts and scholia[5].

If this is the situation for the Greek-speaking cultural world, it is hardly surprising that traces of Alexander's commentary in the Latin West are rather rare and uncertain. After the pioneering work of Lorenzo Minio-Paluello[6], the scholar who has dealt in particular with the vestiges of this work is Sten Ebbesen, who has gone back to the

1 P. Moraux, *Le commentaire d'Alexandre d'Aphrodise aux 'Seconds Analytiques' d'Aristote*, Berlin-New York, Walter De Gruyter, 1979 (reprint 2013).

2 *Ibid.*, p. 141. Some further new evidence for this attribution of the anonymous to Alexander in F. Bellucci, C. Marmo, "Sign and Demonstration in Late-Ancient Commentaries on the Posterior Analytics", in CIMAGL, 87 (2018), p. 1-33 (in particular p. 12-18).

3 Moraux, *Le commentaire d'Alexandre d'Aphrodise*, p. 6.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 141-142.

6 L. Minio Paluello, "Note sull'Aristotele latino medievale. XIV. Frammenti del commento perduto d'Alessandro d'Afrodisia ai 'Secondi Analitici' tradotto da Giacomo Veneto, in un codice di Goffredo di Fontaines (Parigi, B. N. lat. 16080)", in *Rivista di filosofia neo-scolastica*, 54 (1962), p. 131-137; reprinted in *Id.*, *Opuscula. The Latin Aristotle*, Amsterdam, Hadolf M. Hakkert, 1972, p. 442-448 (in particular p. 445-447).

Amos Corbini • Università degli Studi di Torino, amos.corbini@unito.it

Alexander of Aphrodisias in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, ed. by Pietro B. Rossi, Matteo Di Giovanni, and Andrea A. Robiglio, Turnhout, 2021 (*Studia Artistarum*, 45), p. 95-107
© BREPOLS PUBLISHERS
10.1484/M.SA-EB.5.120538

subject on more than one occasion, gradually modifying various details within a picture whose fundamental outlines were created in his early studies on the subject[7]. It seems clear in the first place that not only the two passages first found by Minio-Paluello, but all the passages in the Latin writings that we know to be attributed to Alexander are in reality passages from Philoponus' commentary; for this reason Ebbesen believes that in the Latin world "Alexander" is very probably to be considered a false name, taken from some Greek manuscript in which Philoponus' commentary had been mistakenly placed under the name of Alexander[8]. This could very probably have assumed the form of a Byzantine collection of scholia taken mostly from Philoponus and translated into Latin by James of Venice[9]. This hypothetical florilegium only dealt with the first book of Aristotle's work, with respect to which Philoponus' authority was felt to be substantially untouchable in the Greek world, and this would explain both the absence of witnesses attributed to Alexander concerning the second book of Aristotle's work and the fact that Eustratius decided to comment only on the second book[10]. Moreover, besides being of a fragmentary nature, the collection of scholia in question would have enjoyed only a limited circulation outside rather restricted circles (in practice those that led to the production of MS Orléans, Bibliothèque Municipale 283 on which Ebbesen based his studies of the question)[11].

With our present state of knowledge we face a rather disheartening situation: the Latin Middle Ages did not really know Alexander of Aphrodisias' commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* (which moreover only enjoyed a partial and fragmentary

---

7 S. Ebbesen, "Anonymus Aurelianensis II, Aristotle, Alexander, Porphyry and Boethius. Ancient Scholasticism and 12th Century Western Europe", in CIMAGL, 16 (1976), p. 1-127 (in particular p. 89-107); *Id.*, "Anonymi Aurelianensis I. Commentarium in Sophisticos Elenchos", in CIMAGL, 34 (1979), p. 1-197 (in particular in the introduction p. v-xii and xxxiii-xlii); *Id.*, "Analyzing Syllogisms, or Anonimus Aurelianensis III — The (presumably) Earlier Extant Latin Commentary on the Prior Analytics, and its Greek Model", in CIMAGL, 37 (1981), p. 1-20 (in particular p. 3-11); *Id.*, "New Fragments of 'Alexander's' Commentaries on *Posterior Analytics* and *Sophistici Elenchi*", in CIMAGL, (60) 1990, p. 113-120 (in particular p. 113-118); *Id.*, "Philoponus, 'Alexander', and the Origins of Medieval Logic", in R. Sorabji (ed.), *Aristotle Transformed*, London, Duckwort, 1990, p. 445-461 (in particular p. 449-452); *Id.*, "Echoes of the *Posterior Analytics* in the Twelfth Century", in M. Lutz-Bachmann, A. Fidora, P. Antolic (eds), *Erkenntnis und Wissenschaft. Probleme der Epistemologie in der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 2004, p. 69-92; *Id.*, "Fragments of 'Alexander's' Commentaries on *Analytica Posteriora* and *Sophistici Elenchi*", in S. Ebbesen (ed.), *Greek-Latin Philosophical Interaction. Collected Essays of Sten Ebbesen Volume 1*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2008, p. 187-201 (revised version of "New Fragments"); *Id.*, "The *Posterior Analytics* 1100-1400 in East and West", in J. Biard (ed.), *Raison et démostration. Les commentaires médiévaux sur les* Seconds Analytiques, Turnhout, Brepols, 2015, p. 11-30 (in particular p. 11-14). A new Latin fragment of Alexander's commentary in: L. Gili, P. Podolak, "Hugh Eterianus, Alexander of Aphrodisias and Syllogistic Demonstrations. A Newly Discovered Fragment of Alexander of Aphrodisias' Commentary on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*", in *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale*, 29 (2018), p. 137-154 (in particular p. 149-153).

8 Ebbesen, "Anonymus Aurelianensis II", p. 89-90.

9 *Id.*, "Anonymi Aurelianensis I", p. vi-xii.

10 *Id.*, "The *Posterior Analytics* 1100-1400", p. 12-13.

11 *Id.*, "Analyzing Syllogisms", p. 6-7. Maybe this situation could be at least partially modified by the inquiry into the manuscript tradition of Hugh Eterianus' *De sancto e immortali Deo*: cf. Gili, Podolack, "Hugh Eterianus, Alexander of Aphrodisias and Syllogistic Demonstrations", p. 139-141.

circulation in the Greek world as from a date which we cannot at the moment define, but in any case went back to a few centuries after it was written). Indeed when Latin writers quoted *Alexander*, what they knew in reality were extracts from Philoponus' commentary, simply attributed to Alexander by mistake.

In this situation, this article does not aim to add anything fundamentally new to our knowledge of the history of the Latin reception of the commentary by Alexander *alias* Philoponus, but rather it will remain within the framework outlined above and seek to add some new contributions to our knowledge of the situation.

Maybe, Another (and More Authentic) Trace of Alexander's Commentary in the Latin Tradition

During the preparatory work for his edition of Robert Grosseteste's commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*, Pietro B. Rossi noted that, besides clear evidence of Grosseteste's knowledge of Themistius' paraphrase of the *Posterior Analytics*, the work also shows that Grosseteste evidently knew a Greek tradition of *expositores* too, even though it is not always clear how Grosseteste came to possess this information. In particular, in Grosseteste's commentary Rossi noted the presence of a passage translated literally from Philoponus' commentary and we can see other three textual parallels[12]. The passages noted by Rossi here have been variously considered both by Rossi himself in his following critical edition and by Ebbesen in further studies in order of their interest as effective evidence of knowledge of the commentary of Alexander/Philoponus in the Latin tradition. In particular it does not seem possible to doubt the origin of the longest passage, translated indeed practically in a heavily literal fashion[13]; Ebbesen unreservedly accepts the second parallel pointed out by Rossi[14] in his article and restricts the length of the third (following Rossi in the apparatus of his edition)[15]; and in his edition, Rossi himself no longer considers the first parallel he had pointed out in his article[16], and Ebbesen does the same. On the other hand, a brief quotation which in his article Rossi had considered to be only general evidence for knowledge of the Greek tradition, is now considered in his edition to have a more precise correspondence in Philoponus[17], while Ebbesen does not seem to consider this passage as proof of any knowledge of Philoponus. Again, there is a

12 P. B. Rossi, "Tracce della versione latina di un commento greco ai Secondi Analitici nel *Commentarius in Posteriorum Analyticorum libros* di Roberto Grossatesta", in *Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scolastica*, 70 (1978), p. 433-439 (in particular p. 434-435).

13 Robertus Grosseteste. *Commentarius in Posteriorum Analyticorum libros*, ed. P. B. Rossi, Firenze, Leo S. Olschki, 1981, p. 142, 167-p. 143, 188; cf. Ebbesen, "New Fragments", p. 117-118, with the respective references to the corresponding point in Philoloponus' Greek text.

14 Grosseteste. *Commentarius*, p. 132, 75-76; cf. Ebbesen, "New Fragments", p. 117.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 134, 110-116; cf. Ebbesen, "New Fragments", p. 117.

16 Rossi, "Tracce della versione latina", p. 437, which corresponds to Grosseteste. *Commentarius*, p. 107, 52-54.

17 Rossi, "Tracce della versione latina", p. 435; Robertus Grosseteste, *Commentarius*, p. 97, 94-96.

passage from Grosseteste claimed by Rossi in his edition to be a possible reference to Philoponus[18] which Ebbesen first considers to be a dubious witness[19], but in his 2008 revision of this article seems to accept unreservedly[20]. On the contrary, in his edition Rossi points to two other passages which Ebbesen had noticed but admits to being perplexed about[21] and does not change his opinion in his later studies. In the uncertain situation in which we find ourselves as to what Latin writers really knew of the commentary by Philoponus mistakenly attributed to Alexander, and aware only that it has to be taken as partial and fragmentary knowledge, it is still very difficult to establish the precise state of the various borrowings which, taken together, seem to have indeed taken place.

There is, however, another aspect of Rossi's work that Ebbesen does not seem to have taken into consideration in his own studies on the subject: at the end of his 1978 article, in fact, Rossi pointed to the existence of some brief interpolations that are found in some manuscript witnesses of Grossseteste's commentary, one of which seems to correspond to passages from Philoponus[22]. Rossi himself took up and developed the question again in the introduction to his edition of the commentary. Here he identifies six interpolations, four of which have some form of parallel in the text of Philoponus' commentary[23].

To facilitate the reader, I quote here the text of the four interpolations transcribed by Rossi[24] and the corresponding points in Philoponus:

a) Nota quod anologia est duplex, quia quedam est anologia que competit uni per se et alteri per accidens, sicut obetas (to be read as: ebrietas?) competit vino per se, in homini (?) per accidens, et talis non videtur nec reperitur in aliquo genere. Alia est que competit utrique (?) per se, quod competit conclusioni et premissis, reliqua licet (?) bene (?) videtur (?) et reperitur in genere.
ἀποροῦσι δέ τινες ἐν τούτοις λέγοντες 'τί οὖν; ἐπειδὴ διὰ τὸν οἶνον ὑπάρχει τὸ μεθύειν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ, ἆρα τὸ μεθύειν μᾶλλον ἐν τῷ οἴνῳ ἐστίν;' ἢ 'ἐπειδὴ διὰ τὸ ξίφος τέθνηκεν ὁ ἄνθρωπος, τὸ τεθνηκέναι μᾶλλον ὑπάρχει τῷ ξίφει;' καὶ 'εἰ τῷ κινουμένῳ ὑπάρχει τὸ θερμαίνεσθαι διὰ τὴν κίνησιν, μᾶλλον ἡ κίνησίς ἐστι θερμὴ ἢ ὁ κινούμενος;' καὶ μυρία τοιαῦτα. φαμὲν οὖν ἐπιλυόμενοι τὴν ἀπορίαν ὅτι, ὅταν δύο τισὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ὑπάρχῃ, ὑπάρχῃ δὲ τῷ ἑτέρῳ τούτων τὸ αὐτὸ διὰ τὸ λοιπόν, πολλῷ δήπου πρότερον καὶ μᾶλλον ἐκείνῳ τοῦτο ὑπάρξει[25].

---

18 Grosseteste. *Commentarius*, p. 114, 111-114.

19 Ebbesen, "New Fragments", p. 117.

20 Ebbesen, "Fragments of 'Alexander's' Commentaries", p. 194.

21 Grosseteste. *Commentarius*, p. 214, 256-p. 215, 271; p. 360, 303-p. 361, 326; for Ebbesen these are *very doubtful* passages that at most show a *family resemblance* to the works of Philoponus (cf. Ebbesen, "New Fragments", p. 118; cf. Ebbesen, "Fragments of 'Alexander's' Commentaries", p. 197).

22 Rossi, "Tracce della versione latina", p. 438-439.

23 Grosseteste. *Commentarius*, p. 70-72.

24 The first three interpolations are only present in MS Oxford, Merton College, *295*, on f. 92vb, 93vb, 94ra respectively. The fourth is found in a large group of manuscripts probably of continental origin.

25 Ioannes Philoponus. *In Aristotelis Analytica Posteriora Commentaria cum anonymo in librum II*, ed. M. Wallies, Berlin, Reimer, 1909, p. 38, 4-11.

b) Nota quando Aristoteles dicit: *Substantia enim ipsorum ex his est*, habet intelligi sic quod substantia linearum et superficierum sit ex his, id est, linea sit ex punctis, quia punctus cadit in diffinitione linee vel quia linea sit ex fluxu multorum punctorum et superficies sit ex fluxu multarum linearum. Nota (?) secundum platonem quod triangulis (?) est linea tribus angulis distincta, secundum euclidem (?) vero est superficies plana tribus lineis contenta. Item secundum platonem linea est punctus deffluens a distantia in distantia (!). Hec secundum euclidem (?) est longitudo sine latitudine, cuius extremitates sunt duo puncta /// (*ras.*)
Διορισάμενος τί ἐστι τὸ κατὰ παντός, μέτεισιν ἐπὶ τὸ καθ᾽αὑτό. τέσσαρα δὲ σημαινόμενα παραδίδωσι τοῦ καθ᾽αὑτό· ὧν πρῶτον μέν φησι καθ᾽αὑτὸ λέγεσθαι τὸ ἐν τῷ τί ἐστί τινος κατηγορούμενον, ὅπερ καὶ ἐν τῷ ὁρισμῷ ἐκείνου παραλαμβάνεται. οἷον καθ᾽αὑτὸ ὑπάρχειν φαμὲν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ τὸ ζῷον καὶ τῷ τριγώνῳ τὸ σχῆμα [καὶ τῇ γραμμῇ ἡ στιγμή]·τό τε γὰρ ζῷον καθ᾽αὑτὸ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου κατηγορούμενον καὶ ἐν τῷ ὁρισμῷ τούτου παραλαμβάνεται· ἄνθρωπον μὲν γάρ φησι ζῷον λογικὸν θνητόν· ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τρίγωνον σχῆμά ἐστι τὸ ὑπὸ τριῶν εὐθειῶν περιεχόμενον. φησὶ δὲ καὶ τῆς γραμμῆς τὴν στιγμὴν καθ᾽αὑτὸ κατηγορεῖσθαι· φαμὲν γὰρ γραμμὴν εἶναι ῥύσιν στιγμῆς ἢ γραμμὴν εἶναι τὴν ἐξ ἴσου τοῖς ἐφ᾽ἑαυτῆς σημείοις κειμένην. καὶ ἰστέον ὅτι οὐκ ἔστι τῆς γραμμῆς κυρίως τὸ λεγόμενον· οὐ πάνυ γὰρ οἰκείως εἰρῆσθαι δοκεῖ· οὔτε γὰρ ἐν γραμμῇ ἡ στιγμὴ ὑπάρχει. ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον οἰκεῖός τις ὁρισμὸς ἂν εἴη τῆς γραμμῆς ὁ λέγων 'μέγεθος ἐφ᾽ἓν διαστατόν'·τὰ γὰρ ἐν τούτῳ τῷ ὁρισμῷ παραλαμβανόμενα συμπληρωτικά ἐστι τῆς <οὐσίας τῆς> γραμμῆς καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ ἐνυπάρχει[26].

c) Nota quod quando multiplicans et multiplicatum sunt equalia, tunc dicitur numerus (?) esse equilaterus (?), sed quando non sunt elia (essentialia?) tunc dicitur numerus esse cuius altera pars est longior.

d) Sex accidentia que sequuntur per se insunt numero] Scilicet par, inpar, primum, compositum, equilaterum, altera parte longius per se insunt numero; quamquam enim dicatur triangulus equilaterus, non secundum eandem intentionem, sed forte equivoce reperitur per se in numero et triangulo.
Καὶ ταῦτα, φησί, καθ᾽ αὑτὰ ὑπάρχει τῷ ἀριθμῷ, διότι ἐν τῷ ἑκάστου τούτων ὁρισμῷ τὸ ὑποκείμενον αὐτοῖς, λέγω δὴ τὸν ἀριθμόν, παραλαμβάνομεν. ἰστέον δ᾽ ὅτι ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος πρῶτον ἀριθμὸν ἀκούει ἐνταῦθα οὐ τὸν καθ᾽ αὑτὸν πρῶτον ἀλλὰ τὸν πρὸς ἄλλον πρῶτον. ἔστι δὲ πρῶτος ἀριθμὸς ὁ ὑπὸ μονάδος μόνης μετρούμενος, οἷον ὁ ε', ὁ ζ', ὁ ια', ὁ ιζ'· οὔτε γὰρ ὑπὸ δυάδος οὔτε ὑπ᾽ οὐδενὸς ἄλλου ἀριθμοῦ μετροῦνται οὗτοι πλὴν ὑπὸ μονάδος μόνης. σύνθετοι δὲ καλοῦνται ἀριθμοὶ οἱ ἐκ μονάδος καὶ ἄλλου τινὸς ἢ τινῶν ἄλλων ἀριθμῶν μετρούμενοι, οἷον ὁ ς'· καὶ γὰρ ὑπὸ δυάδος καὶ τριάδος καὶ μονάδος· ὁμοίως καὶ ὁ θ' ὑπό τε μονάδος καὶ τριάδος. πρὸς ἀλλήλους δὲ πρῶτοι λέγονται ἀριθμοὶ οἱ μονάδι μόνῃ μετρούμενοι κοινῷ μέτρῳ· οἵός ἐστιν ὁ ζ' καὶ ὁ ια'· ὑπὸ μόνης γὰρ μονάδος ὡς κοινοῦ μέτρου μετροῦνται. ὅτι δὲ οὐχ ὡς φησὶν ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος τοὺς πρὸς ἀλλήλους πρώτους ἐνταῦθα παρέλαβεν ἀλλὰ τοὺς ἁπλῶς πρώτους, φανερὸν ἐξ ὧν οὐκ εἶπεν ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης πληθυντικῶς πρώτους ἀριθμοὺς ἀλλὰ πρῶτον. ὁμοίως καὶ τὸ ἰσόπλευρον καὶ ἑτερόμηκες ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος οὐκ ἐπὶ ἀριθμῶν ἀλλ᾽ ἐπὶ σχημάτων ἔλαβεν, ὅπερ ἦν καὶ εἰκὸς ἐπινοῆσαι. οὐ μὴν ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης ἐπὶ

26 Philoponus. *In Aristotelis Analytica Posteriora*, p. 60, 15-30.

> σχημάτων ταῦτα τέθεικεν ἀλλ' ἐπὶ ἀριθμῶν· καὶ γάρ φαμεν ἰσοπλεύρους ἀριθμοὺς εἶναι τοὺς τετραγώνους, οἷον τὸν θ', διότι τοῦ γ' ἐφ' ἑαυτὸν πολυπλασιασθέντος γέγονεν· ἑτερομήκεις δὲ τοὺς ἐξ ἀνίσων ἀριθμῶν πολυπλασιασθέντων γενομένους· οἷον τὸν ιε' ἑτερομήκη λέγομεν· σύγκειται γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ ε' ἐπὶ τὸν γ' πολυπλασιασθέντος. ὅτι δὲ οὐκ ἐπὶ σχημάτων ἔλαβε τὸ ἰσόπλευρον καὶ ἑτερόμηκες ἀλλ' ἐπ' ἀριθμῶν, ἐδήλωσεν ἐξ ὧν ἐπήγαγε λέγων· Καὶ πᾶσι τούτοις…[27]

For our purposes here we can leave aside passage b), which, as Rossi himself admits, is the most difficult to trace back to Philoponus and, in effect, it is not easy to say whether the Latin text effectively demonstrates knowledge albeit mediated in some way. We will return later to passage a).

I believe that passages c) and d), on the other hand, are an interesting case. Indeed, as we can see, the Greek text by Philoponus which serves as a parallel contains two quotations from Alexander's works[28], evidence, that is, that Philoponus gives us of a doctrine *belonging to* Alexander (and not this time a doctrine professed *in reality* by Philoponus and *mistakenly* attributed by the Latins to Alexander). Therefore, as we have said, while all the other works quoted by Ebbesen in his studies as proof of knowledge of Alexander in the Latin world only show in reality knowledge of Philoponus' text which had been mistaken for that of Alexander due to some historical accident, in this case we have direct knowledge of a work by Philoponus, which refers in turn to a genuine interpretation of a passage from Aristotle's work which had come from Alexander's lost commentary. I would perhaps not go as far as to say that these lines are the only trace known so far in the Latin tradition of a doctrine which, as far as we know, derives directly from the 'true' commentary by Alexander of Aphrodisias, because the Latin passage is short and is divided into two distinct interpolations, and they have been handed down by manuscripts which are different and have a disparate provenance[29]. The mists of uncertainty that shroud the history of Alexander of Aphrodisias' commentary have certainly not been totally dispelled here; but, it seems to be a correspondence worthy of note, which can be legitimately added to our dossier of knowledge on Alexander's commentary in the Latin world, which (perhaps) has more of a claim to nobility than other passages.

Another Hint in Albertus' Commentary

As for interpolation a) on the other hand, I personally believe that on the basis of a comparison between the passages quoted, there is sufficient reason to see another of the family resemblances between the two texts that Ebbesen found in passages that, unlike this one, he then included in his sylloge of the passages revealing knowledge of

---

27 *Ibid.*, p. 61, 31-p. 62, 22.

28 These are passages 9 and 10 quoted by Moraux among evidence of Alexander's lost commentary (Moraux, *Le commentaire*, p. 19).

29 See, moreover, the reserve expressed in the work quoted in note 24.

the commentary by Alexander/Philoponus. But these passages are further illuminated by an extract from Albertus Magnus' commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*, which is also worthy of consideration in our attempt to trace what we can of the Latin reception of Alexander/Philoponus[30]. Ebbesen had already noted the presence of four explicit quotations from *Alexander* in this commentary, pointing out however that the first two refer in reality to Alexander's commentary on the *De sensu et sensato*, while the second two do not correspond to parallel passages in Alexander that we know of[31], and confirming once again the notoriously labyrinthine nature of the quotations contained in Albert's works.

Nevertheless, we can perhaps add a further piece to the puzzle. See the following passage:

> In entibus enim per accidens agentibus non est hoc verum. Vinum enim per accidens inebriat: et hoc enim inebriat, quod est evaporativum: et ideo non sequitur: homo est ebrius propter vinum: ergo vinum est magis ebrium: homo est calidus propter motum: ergo motus magis calidus: terra est calida propter solem: ergo sol est magis calidus. Nec sequitur etiam hoc in hiis quae dicuntur magis et minus (per intensionem factam per accidens) calefieri, et non per motum caliditatis: sicut patet quod lapis est calidus propter ignem et solem: et tamen lapis calidior est igne, ut vult Aristoteles in IV *Meteororum*: quia propter spissitudinem et constantiam partium et densitatem, intensior caliditatis est lapis calidus quam ignis. Sed in omnibus per se et univoce agentibus, in quibus passio est formalis et substantialis effectus activae actionis, verum est semper quod propter quod unumquodque sicut agens per se et univocum est tale, illud magis est tale.
> Et hoc etiam in causis finalibus etiam est verum. Unde propter quod sicut propter finem amamus aliquid, illud est nobis magis amicum et amatum: ut quia diligimus filium propter patrem: ergo patrem magis: divitias et potentatum propter felicitatem amamus: ergo felicitatem magis amamus. Ergo sequitur, quod ista propositio sit probata, quod si scimus conclusionem quoniam adesse credimus consequentiam conclusionis per prima, hoc est, propter principia formaliter agentia (ex notitia quidem ipsorum et ex habitudine eorum accipimus consequentiae fidem) quod

30 After Grosseteste's work, which dates to the years 1220-30 (cf. Grosseteste. *Commentarius*, p. 15-19) and before the work by Albertus Magnus, written a little after 1260 (cf. R.-A. Gauthier in the preface to Thomas de Aquino. *Opera omnia*, iussu Leonis XIII P. M. edita, tomus I* 2, *Expositio libri Posteriorum*, Roma-Paris, Commissio Leonina-Vrin 1989, p. 58*), we can place the paraphrase by Robert Kilwardby, a critical edition of which is being prepared by Luigi Campi (Università Statale di Milano) and Pietro B. Rossi. Only a provisional edition of this work is available, however, contained in the doctoral thesis of D. Cannone, *Le* Notule libri Posteriorum *di Robert Kilwardby nella tradizione esegetica latina medievale del XIII secolo*, Università degli Studi di Cassino in consorzio con Università degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza, Academic Year 2003-2004. In this thesis, at p. 72-76, Cannone presents two passages which could be possible evidence of a direct knowledge of Alexander/Philoponus, but in both cases it does not seem that the texts present clear traces of the use of the Greek writer: in the first case, in fact, it would seem to be Grosseteste who is being directly quoted, and in the second a scholium that seems to me to have only a very vague analogy with a passage from Philoponus.

31 Ebbesen, "Anonymus Aurelianensis II", p. 89.

> prima magis scimus et credimus: eo quod propter illa credimus etiam posteriora, quae sunt ex ipsis consequentes conclusiones[32].

Now see the following passage from Philoponus:

> Ἐπειδὴ εἶπεν ὅτι δεῖ τὰ πρὸς τὴν ἀπόδειξιν παραλαμβανόμενα καὶ γνωριμώτερα εἶναι καὶ πιστότερα τοῦ συμπεράσματος, αὐτὸ τοῦτο προτίθεται νῦν κατασκευάσαι. φησὶν οὖν ὅτι, ὅταν δύο τινὰ ὦσι καὶ ὑπάρχῃ τι τῷ ἑτέρῳ διὰ τὸ λοιπόν, ἀνάγχη ἐκείνῳ μᾶλλον ὑπάρχειν δι' ὃ καὶ τῷ ἑτέρῳ ὑπάρχειν λέγεται· οἷον εἰ φιλοῦμεν τὸν διδάσκαλον διὰ τὸν παῖδα, τὸν παῖδα μᾶλλον φιλοῦμεν. ὥστε εἰ τὸ συμπέρασμα διὰ τὰς προτάσεις πιστεύομεν, ἀνάγχη δήπου τὰς προτάσεις πολλῷ μᾶλλον τοῦ συμπεράσματος πιστοτέρας εἶναι· εἰ γάρ, πρὶν τῶν ἀρχῶν πίστιν λάβωμεν, πιστεύσομεν τῷ συμπεράσματι, οὐκ ἀπόδειξις ἂν τοῦτο εἴη μᾶλλον ἢ ἀπάτη. ὥστε εἴ τις τὸν δεῖνα λέγοι περὶ τοῦδε εἰρηκέναι ὅτι ἀγαθὸς εἴη, ἡμεῖς δὲ μὴ εἰδότες τὸν εἰπόντα, εἴτε ἀληθὴς εἴη εἴτε μή, πιστεύσομεν περὶ ἐκείνου ὅτι ἔστιν ἀγαθός, δῆλον ὅτι, εἰ μὴ ἐκεῖνος ἀξιόπιστος εἴη, οὐδ' ἂν ὁ μαρτυρούμενος ἔχοι τὸ εἶναι ἀγαθός. […]
> ἀποροῦσι δέ τινες ἐν τούτοις λέγοντες 'τί οὖν; ἐπειδὴ διὰ τὸν οἶνον ὑπάρχει τὸ μεθύειν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ, ἆρα τὸ μεθύειν μᾶλλον ἐν τῷ οἴνῳ ἐστίν;' ἢ 'ἐπειδὴ διὰ τὸ ξίφος τέθνηκεν ὁ ἄνθρωπος, τὸ τεθνηκέναι μᾶλλον ὑπάρχει τῷ ξίφει;' καὶ 'εἰ τῷ κινουμένῳ ὑπάρχει τὸ θερμαίνεσθαι διὰ τὴν κίνησιν, μᾶλλον ἡ κίνησίς ἐστι θερμὴ ἢ ὁ κινούμενος;' καὶ μυρία τοιαῦτα. φαμὲν οὖν ἐπιλυόμενοι τὴν ἀπορίαν ὅτι, ὅταν δύο τισὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ὑπάρχῃ, ὑπάρχῃ δὲ τῷ ἑτέρῳ τούτων τὸ αὐτὸ διὰ τὸ λοιπόν, πολλῷ δήπου πρότερον καὶ μᾶλλον ἐκείνῳ τοῦτο ὑπάρξει. οἷον εἰ τῷ ὕδατι τὸ θερμῷ εἶναι διὰ τὸ πῦρ ὑπάρχει, δῆλον ὅτι μᾶλλόν ἐστι θερμότερον τὸ πῦρ· ὁμοίως εἰ τῷ σώματι τὸ ψυχρὸν ὑπάρχοι διὰ τὴν χίονα, πολλῷ δήπου μᾶλλον τῇ χιόνι τοῦτο ὑπάρξει. ὅθεν καὶ αὐτὸς τοῦτο αὐτὸ αἰνιττόμενος εἶπεν ὅτι ἐκείνῳ μᾶλλον ὑπάρχει, ὡς δι' ὃ κἀκείνῳ, τῷ πρώτῳ φημί, τὸ τοιοῦτον ὑπάρχει· οὐχ ὑπάρχει δὲ ὅλως τῷ οἴνῳ τὸ μεθύειν, ἵνα εἴπωμεν ὅτι καὶ μᾶλλον ἔδει αὐτῷ ὑπάρχειν ἢ τῷ πιόντι, οὐδὲ τῷ ξίφει τὸ τεθνάναι οὐδὲ τῇ κινήσει ἡ θερμότης[33].

If we compare these two passages, I believe we can see in the first place that there is an interesting resemblance between the examples used: we find examples of the wine that causes drunkenness but is not drunk, the man who is hot because of movement although movement itself is not hot, and the son beloved by the father's love (which in the Greek takes an analogous but different form). These are not examples present in the Latin tradition of the *Posterior Analytics*[34] before Albert, so at this point Albert is not following Grosseteste or Kilwardby, as he does relatively frequently[35];

---

32 Albertus Magnus. *In libros Posteriorum Analyticorum*, in *Id.*, *Opera omnia*, ed. A. Borgnet, tomus II, Paris, Vivès, 1890, p. 31b-32a.

33 Philoponus. *In Aristotelis Analytica Posteriora*, p. 37, 17-p. 38, 19.

34 Even if the first of these was to be used, for example, by Thomas Aquinas with a variant rightly noted by Gauthier (cf. Thomas de Aquino. *Expositio libri Posteriorum*, p. 56*), but considered by him to be an unequivocal sign of Aquinas' use of Themistius, while in reality the same example is also present in the passage from Philoponus quoted above, on p. 37, 21-22.

35 I have already discussed this point in A. Corbini, "Robert Kilwardby and the Aristotelian Theory of Science", in H. Lagerlund, P. Thom (eds), *A Companion to the Philosophy of Robert Kilwardby*, Leiden-Boston, E. J. Brill, 2013, p. 163-207.

moreover, the first two examples are not to be found in the corresponding point in Themistius' paraphrase, a well-known source, as we have already mentioned, for Latin commentators right from the beginning of the exegetical tradition. This seems, therefore, to be more than a chance coincidence, especially seeing that the two passages discuss the same point in Aristotle's work[36].

But there is a second element that I believe ought to be stressed: as we can see, the passage from Philoponus quoted here contains the parallel with the first scholium on Grosseteste's commentary quoted above as a). If in that case the resemblance remained somewhat vague, the fact that the same passage here presents a clearer analogy with Albertus Magnus seems to further support the possibility that, in some way that we cannot yet define, at least a relatively detailed echo of the passage from Alexander/Philoponus quoted here effectively filtered into the Latin tradition, to such an extent as to be echoed both in a scholium to Grosseteste, and in Albertus' commentary. It is not even a literal quotation. Since the studies quoted above have already demonstrated that the commentary by Philoponus translated into Latin (probably by James of Venice) circulated in a fragmentary form, it does not seem to be unreasonable at this point to suppose that perhaps an abbreviated or paraphrased version of this passage from Philoponus was in some way known to both Albertus Magnus and to the author of the scholium on Grosseteste's commentary.

David Bloch's Hypothesis and the Disappearance of Alexander since the 1260s

It seems that there are no echoes, even fragmentary and vague, of any knowledge of Alexander/Philoponus in the Latin world beyond the 1260s, however. If indeed some of the themes present in Themistius' paraphrase filtered into successive writers even (and perhaps above all) thanks to the great importance that it had after it was used by Grosseteste, it does not seem to me that in the commentaries of the last thirty years of the thirteenth century we find analogous signs of a direct knowledge of what could have filtered from the Greek commentary that we are interested in here. In Aquinas' commentary, for example, Gauthier points out that the presentation of the squaring of the circle as Bryson would have understood it does not follow that which Philoponus presents as the presentation by Alexander in his commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* (which Aquinas could find in the Latin tradition in both Themistius and Grosseteste)[37], and in the whole of Aquinas' commentary I have not noticed any other possible uses of it.

An analogous discourse can be made for Giles of Rome's monumental literal commentary. Giles had a careful and detailed knowledge of the Latin tradition which came before him, but his commentary does not seem to provide us with any elements to state clearly that he used extracts or themes that we know to derive

36 *An. Post.* I, 72a25-31.

37 Thomas de Aquino. *Expositio libri Posteriorum*, p. 64; cf. Moraux, *Le commentaire*, p. 24-32.

from Alexander/Philoponus, while he often explicitly quotes from Themistius' paraphrase and he uses it even more frequently without naming it, or he takes elements from it which have stably filtered into the tradition that came before him. But what might seem from a certain point of view to be even more surprising is the absence of Alexander/Philoponus in the commentaries in the form of questions by Simon of Faversham and Radulphus Brito, which are often among the sources cited by Ebbesen as evidence for knowledge of the Greek writer translated into Latin in their commentaries on the *Sophistical Refutations*. Strangely, however, they disappoint us in their commentaries on the *Posterior Analytics*, where the same things we said for Giles of Rome above are valid. Indeed, even when *Alexander* is quoted from the last quarter of the thirteenth century, what we mostly read seems to be merely the repetition of a notable *sententia* present in the Orléans manuscript which Ebbesen used as the basis for his studies[38].

Faced with this rather disheartening situation (and perhaps as a reaction against it), a new hypothesis has been recently put forward by David Bloch. In his 2010 article[39] Bloch began by noting how, in his *Metalogicon*, John of Salisbury quotes from the twenty-second chapter of the first book of the *Posterior Analytics*, in such an imprecise way that it can only be reasonably explained by the fact that he had not directly read Aristotle's work, either in the translation by James of Venice or in the much less well-known translation by *Ioannis*. Bloch formulates various theories about what John's source really was: perhaps a Latin florilegium, which might have borrowed from pre-existing material of Greek origin, or perhaps a compendium of Arabic origin such as the *Liber introductorius in artem logicae demonstrationis* published at the end of the nineteenth century, which as far as we know was already in circulation in twelfth century.

---

38 The most striking example is the sententia *oratio demontrativa est finis logici negotii* which, taken in reality from the beginning of Philoponus' commentary, is attributed to Alexander in one of the two fragments originally transcribed by Lorenzo Minio-Paluello ("Frammenti del commento perduto", p. 446) and it is noted by Ebbesen as being present in various other manuscripts: besides three occurrences in works in the same Orléans manuscript which served as the basis of Ebbesen's studies, Ebbesen believes he has found a trace of it in the first question on the *Sophistical Refutations* by Radulphus Brito, in an anonymous commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* (Ebbesen, "Anonymus Aurelianensis II", p. 91-92; quotation confirmed by C. Marmo, "Anonymus Cordubensis, *Questiones super librum primum Posteriorum*. A Partial Edition: Prologue and qq. 1-5", in CIMAGL, 61 (1991), p. 107-139 in particular p. 134), in an equally anonymous commentary on the *Prior Analytics* (Ebbesen, "Anonymi Aurelianensis I", p. xxxix), and he notes its presence in the commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* by James of Douai (Ebbesen, "Philoponus, 'Alexander', and the Origins", p. 113). We could add to this list the first series of questions on the *Posterior Analytics* by Simon of Faversham (MS Oxford, Merton College 292, f. 138rb: "Ergo logici est considerare finem ultimum et optimum in arte sillogizandi; sed ars demonstrandi est ultimum et optimum in arte sillogizandi, scientia enim de sillogismo ordinatur ad scientiam de demonstrationem. Et ad hoc advertens quidam expositor Graecus super libro Posteriorum dicit: demonstratio est finis logici negotii, alias enim logicas scripturas propter demonstrationem nobis tradidit Aristoteles"). It is possible that further evidence will emerge from the study of other anonymous commentaries from the last quarter of the thirteenth century.

39 D. Bloch, "Monstrosities and Twitterings: A Note on the Early Reception of the *Posterior Analytics*", in CIMAGL, 79 (2010), p. 1-6 (in particular p. 4-6).

Bloch put his hypothesis forward in a more detailed way in his book on John of Salisbury, in which he not only showed at greater length how John's knowledge of the *Posterior Analytics* cannot be considered to be precise and detailed, as it was evidently not based on a direct reading of Aristotle's text; but he also broadened his analysis in a direction which is of interest to us here. In the first place, he showed how some passages from the Orléans manuscript in reality often show a certain degree of confusion as to what the real doctrines professed by Aristotle are. Thus, in one passage, Alexander is contrasted with Aristotle as if he had professed a different doctrine on science, while in realty what is attributed to Alexander/Philoponus is merely what we know to be the doctrine of Aristotle himself, which would reveal the Latin manuscript to possess a somewhat approximate knowledge of what was really professed by Aristotle rather than a detailed knowledge of the doctrines of the Greek commentator[40]. In the second place, one of the fragments handed down as being from Alexander/Philoponus quotes a doctrine on demonstrative principles that stresses the importance of their *credulitas*, which is similar in terminology at least to what we find in several parts of Algazel's *Logic*. On one hand this could make us think that this work was perhaps known in the Latin Middle Ages in the twelfth century; on the other it leaves us totally in the dark as to how and how much of this work could have circulated in this period[41].

This clue, together with considerations made in his earlier article, leads Bloch to suppose that in the Latin Middle Ages knowledge of Alexander/Philoponus can at times be mixed with material from the Arabic tradition and it may have circulated in handbooks or compendia that no longer had the original form of a literal commentary on Aristotle's work[42]. This is an attractive hypothesis at least, but it seems to present more than a few difficulties and it can lead us here to make some concluding remarks.

An attractive hypothesis, we have said, only that as Bloch himself admits, at our present state of knowledge, it is simply impossible to verify[43]. Let us go back for a moment to the beginning: the original commentary by Alexander was not only lost to us but in the Greek world too, and from a relatively early period it probably circulated in a partial or fragmentary form. What we possess of it is indeed very little, based on witnesses which are sometimes very far removed in time from the original redaction (as in the case of the fragments from the second book found in Eustratius), so it is indeed very complicated, if not impossible were it not for the small amount of information that we possess, to go and find possible references to Alexander's work in Arabic works on logic and theory of science translated into Latin, unless there were explicit quotations, naturally, but so far none have been found. But, to further complicate the question, Bloch again reminds us that the whole question of the influence of Arabic logic on Latin logic from the twelfth century onwards is

40 D. Bloch, *John of Salisbury on Aristotelian Science*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2012, p. 169-171.
41 *Ibid.*, p. 136-137.
42 *Ibid.*, p. 172.
43 *Ibid.*

extremely difficult to determine[44], so that, even if we were to find some more or less remote echo that could be traced back with reasonable probability to Alexander in some compendium or handbook of Arabic origin, we would still have to understand whether, how, and where the Latin West could have gained knowledge of such a work.

But besides all these complex historical processes in the translation and transmission of works that make the question rather impenetrable at the present time, there is another question of a more particularly doctrinal nature, which, as I see it, has not yet been clarified sufficiently in studies devoted to the subject. If we read the Greek fragments rigorously and expertly collected by Moraux, even if we only know Aristotle's difficult work a little and we have seen the important studies and commentaries on it by writers closer to our time, we cannot but remain with a bitter taste in our mouths because, unfortunately, none of the 51 Greek fragments ordered and published by Moraux tackles any of the important points of Aristotle's theory of science, discusses a doctrine completely, or puts forward an interpretation of general import. These fragments concern at most interpretations of individual passages, often of individual words, from Aristotle's work, which are not banal in themselves but are not particularly significant from a theoretical point of view; or they stress aspects which are not perhaps insignificant in themselves, but with respect to which we are not able to state what value they had for Alexander within an overall reading of the theory of science. As such, they do not present any theoretical substance beyond the few words with which these observations have come down to us[45]. But even if we wanted to shift the focus of our discussion from the 'true' historical Alexander who read the *Posterior Analytics* to the person the Latins called Alexander, and hence in reality to the commentary by John Philoponus translated into Latin, and to what was known of it, I believe that the tone of the discourse would not be very different, with the partial exception of the longest passage from Grosseteste quoted above, which effectively had a certain influence on the Latin tradition[46].

---

44 *Ibid.*, p. 137.

45 Various texts by Alexander do not in effect have any authentic theoretical importance; for some examples of slightly more significant cases, which touch at least on some interesting points, albeit with limits specified in the text, see for example passages 1, 11, 12, 14, 15, 19, 27, 29, 30, 39, 44, 45, 49, 51B quoted by Moraux.

46 On this point see A. Corbini, *La teoria della scienza nel XIII secolo. I commenti agli* Analitici secondi, Firenze, Sismel-Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2006, p. 196-200. But we must add another problem here: how reliable is Philoponus when he quotes Alexander? In fact, recent studies haved pointed out that, in the case of other Aristotelian works, when Philoponus quotes explicitly Alexander he is sometimes less accurate in reporting his thought than in other passages containing real quotations of Alexander, though non attributed to him. On this basis, we cannot exclude that the same happens for the *Posterior Analytics*: in this case, moreover, the little amount of doctrine that Philoponus reports as Alexander's would be of dubious reliability. Unfortunately, for all the reasons mentioned above, we cannot solve this further puzzle. Cf. S. Fazzo, "Alessandro di Afrodisia sulle 'contrarietà tangibili' (*De gen. et corr.* II.2): Fonti greche e arabe a confronto", in C. D'Ancona-G. Serra (eds), *Aristotele e Alessandro di Afrodisia nella tradizione araba*: *Atti del convegno "La recezione araba ed ebraica della filosofia e della scienza greche", Padova, 14-15/5/1999*, Padova, Il poligrafo, 2002, p. 151-189.

Here, then, with the current state of affairs, and hence unless there is some ground-breaking textual discovery which we cannot at present foresee, I fear that we must decisively re-examine Moraux's somewhat peremptory judgement deploring the lack of surviving witnesses:

> les vestiges, trop maigres, hélas!, d'un commentaire qui, tant par son contenu que par l'influence qu'il a exercée, fait date dans l'histoire de l'aristotélisme[47].

As I believe has been sufficiently demonstrated, in reality the content of this commentary is poorly known to us with respect to its Greek text and, as far as the Latin world is concerned, the whole question rests essentially on the confusion of names which happened at a certain point (which we are not able to specify) in the tradition. But if we restrict our discourse here to the Latin world, even the question of influence, as far as we know, is confined to a period of time which does not seem to go beyond the 1270s and to a doctrinal impact which is unfortunately very small. All things considered, the great historical importance of Alexander as an Aristotelian commentator does not seem to concern, *hélas!*, the history of the reception and the interpretation of the *Posterior Analytics* in the Latin world.

47 MORAUX, *Le commentaire*, p. VII-VIII.

ELISA RUBINO

Alberto il Grande e il commento ai *Meteorologica* di Alessandro di Afrodisia

La datazione delle opere di Alberto il Grande costituisce un problema storiografico che occupa da tempo la critica. Alcuni punti fermi sono stati fissati nella discussione tra gli storici della filosofia e con la pubblicazione dei volumi della prestigiosa *Editio Coloniensis* «lässt sich Alberts Werkchronologie allmählich genauer rekonstruiren»[1]. Tuttavia, in presenza di un numero ristretto di testimoni autografi, le prove documentarie sono state ricercate dagli studiosi all'interno dei testi albertini. E grande rilevanza hanno assunto le traduzioni latine del *corpus aristotelicum*[2], utilizzate dal maestro domenicano nella stesura dei suoi commenti. Nuove evidenze testuali possono pertanto contribuire a fare chiarezza su questioni ancora dubbie.

Nel presente contributo verranno esaminate alcune citazioni del commento di Alessandro di Afrodisia ai *Meteorologica* di Aristotele, presenti nei *Meteora* di Alberto secondo la traduzione moerbecana. Tali occorrenze, sebbene poco numerose e non molto estese, possono fornire nuovi elementi utili a precisare la datazione dei *Meteora* di Alberto il Grande, fissata ad oggi entro il 1257[3]. E conseguentemente potrebbero riaprire la discussione intorno alla datazione di alcuni commenti albertini strettamente connessi alla esegesi dei *Meteorologica*, come per esempio il *De anima*.

1 L. Sturlese, «Albert der Große», in P. Schulthess, A. Brungs, V. Mudroch (eds), *Die Philosophie des Mittelalters*, Bd. 4, *13. Jahrhundert* (Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Begründet von Friedrich Ueberweg. Völlig neu bearbeitete Ausgabe, hrsg. von Helmut Holzhey), Basel, Schwabe, 2017, p. 917.

2 Cf. Albertus Magnus. *De anima*, ed. C. Stroick (Opera omnia, VII,1), Münster i. W., Aschendorff, 1968, p. v-vii.

3 Albertus Magnus. *Meteora*, ed. P. Hossfeld (Opera omnia, VI, 1), Münster i. W., Aschendorff, 2003, p. v-vi.

Elisa Rubino • Università del Salento, Lecce, elisa.rubino@unisalento.it

Alexander of Aphrodisias in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, ed. by Pietro B. Rossi, Matteo Di Giovanni, and Andrea A. Robiglio, Turnhout, 2021 (*Studia Artistarum*, 45), p. 109-116
© BREPOLS PUBLISHERS
10.1484/M.SA-EB.5.120539

Alessandro di Afrodisia nel commento albertino ai *Meteorologica*

Il nome di Alessandro di Afrodisia ricorre sei volte nei *Meteora* di Alberto il Grande. La prima citazione si ripete per tre volte nel corso del primo libro del commento albertino, a proposito delle galassie e del rapporto tra moti superiori ed inferiori. La quarta e la quinta si trovano nel terzo libro, trattato quarto, che riguarda il fenomeno della rifrazione. L'ultima infine all'inizio del quarto libro, trattato primo, dedicato alle qualità attive e passive degli elementi.

Albertus Magnus, *Meteora*, p. 6, 47-7, 14:

> 1. *Quia ergo* hoc *est manifestum, tunc* quaeramus causam eorum, quae generantur in alto, sicut est *galaxia et cometes et assub et anazeli et similia. Dico ergo quod* quattuor corpora, *ignis, aër, aqua, terra, generantur et corrumpuntur et alterantur ad invicem, et* unumquodque ipsorum *est in* forma alterius *in potentia*. Et ideo *quaedam* illorum *alterantur* aliquando *ad altera*. Et ideo cum *aqua* sit *liquida*, est facile vaporabilis et *separabilis a loco suo*. Quia quando vaporat, quantum recipit de natura aëris, tantum etiam recipit de loco aëris et tantum *separatur* a loco suo naturali. Aquae enim *non inest* natura, qua *in se aggregetur* et terminetur, cum sit male in se terminabilis.
> Hoc tamen secundum **Alexandrum** aliter exponitur, qui dicit quod aqua in sua sphaera vel loco non aggregatur aggregatione congelationis, quia aquae non accidit congelari nisi egredienti extra proprium locum, **sicut nec igni lucere**. Huius autem causa est, quia quaelibet res in suo loco conservatur in forma sua[4].

Albertus Magnus, *Meteora*, p. 22, 66-71:

> 2. Minima autem lux obvians magnae luci offuscatur et absumitur, sicut apparet in candela obviante lumini solis. Ergo secum non concurrit ad constituendum aliquod lumen maius. Adhuc autem, sicut dicit **Alexander** et plerique philosophi, **ignis in sua sphaera non lucet**.

Albertus Magnus, *Meteora*, p. 23, 41-50:

> 3. Cum ergo nulla sit causa eclipsis lunae, nisi quod luna transit per umbram terrae profundius vel altius, contingeret quod luna numquam posset eclipsari, quod falsum est. **Ergo ignis in sua sphaera non lucet**. Et ideo dicit **Alexander** quod **accidit igni lucere** egredienti extra proprium locum, sicut etiam accidit aquae congelari. Quod autem Aristoteles dicit, non cogit, quia in eodem loco

4 Nelle citazioni n. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 sono riportati in corsivo i lemmi aristotelici secondo i criteri dell'edizione coloniense; il grassetto invece è aggiunto da chi scrive, per mettere in evidenza i lemmi oggetto d'esame nel presente contributo.

simile quid dicit de orbe, qui tamen non ignitur nec inflammatur nisi active, quia est igniens et inflammans.

ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Meteora*, p. 188, 67-79:

4. Et ad hoc sciendum est *quod* numquam *tersio et splendor* sunt *in aëre et aqua, nisi quando quiescunt* a motu, cuius causam satis bene dicit ALFREDUS inquiens quod *ex quiete partes* aëris et aquae, cum *sint similes, confluunt, et sic exterior superficies fit rotunda et levis recipiens radiorum impressionem; ex motu* autem fit *contrarium* huius, cum motus sit *quieti* contrarius. Et haec sententia fuit **ALEXANDRI PERIPATETICI** et THEMISTII. Cum ergo sic quiescunt a motu aër et aqua, *recipiunt radium* solis in profundum sui; et **refringitur** in ipsis *et redditur corporibus* vicinis et multiplicatur in eis, ex qua multiplicatione luminis *pervenit* multiplicatio et maior claritas colorum.

ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Meteora*, p. 189, 69-190,4:

5. Adhuc autem, istam sententiam ARISTOTELIS ita, ut nos diximus, OMNES PHILOSOPHI, scilicet **ALEXANDER** et THEMISTIUS et PORPHYRIUS, sunt interpretati. SENECA etiam in libro NATURALIUM QUAESTIONUM, ubi recitat opinionem 'Aristotelis' de iride, per hunc modum, quem diximus, recitat eam.

ALBERTUS MAGNUS, *Meteora*, p. 211, 13-24:

6. Frigidum autem, eo quod motum habet ad centrum, inspissat subtilia heterogenia sibi et grossa, quae secum sunt eiusdem generis.
Dicit tamen **ALEXANDER** quod diffinitio ista, qua dicitur quod **calidum est congregativum homogeniorum et frigidum heterogeniorum**, simpliciter et universaliter intelligitur. *Et hoc probat exemplo, quia si massa una componatur ex auro et argento et plumbo et ferro et lapidibus et in calidum agens proiciatur, calidum dissolvet massam illam et faciet congregari lapides cum lapidibus et aurum cum auro et unumquodque aliorum cum re sui generis*[5].

Nei primi tre passi Alberto ricorre alla stessa citazione («ignis in sua sphaera non lucet»), che però non trova corrispondenza nel testo di Alessandro di Afrodisia[6]. La quarta citazione si limita a citare soltanto il nome di Alessandro, insieme a quello di due *philosophi*, Temistio e Porfirio.

Le ultime due occorrenze provengono effettivamente dal commento di Alessandro alla meteorologia aristotelica.

---

5 Nella citazione n. 6 sia i corsivi sia i grassetti sono aggiunti da chi scrive: cf. E. RUBINO, «Nota su una nuova citazione di Alfred di Shareshill nei Meteora di Alberto il Grande», in A. BECCARISI, A. PALAZZO (eds), *Per studium et doctrinam. Fonti e testi di filosofia medievale dal XII al XIV secolo* (Flumen Sapientiae, 6), Roma, Aracne, 2018, p. 125-132.

6 Cf. ALBERTUS MAGNUS. *De Caelo et Mundo*, ed. P. HOSSFELD (Opera omnia, V, 1), Münscher i.W., Aschendorff, 1971, p. 143 n. 39; s i veda anche C. VANSTEENKISTE, «Autori Arabi e Giudei nell'opera di San Tommaso», in *Angelicum*, 37 (1960), p. 336-401: a p. 372-374, 378.

«Il fuoco non risplende nella sua sfera»

Per quanto riguarda le citazioni n. 1-3, posso soltanto osservare che il testo non si trova in Aristotele. Alberto sembra sia il primo ad aver formulato in questi precisi termini il teorema «ignis in sphaera sua non lucet». Lo ritroveremo sporadicamente in autori successivi, probabilmente dipendenti da Alberto:

Thomas de Aquino, *In II librum Sententiarum*, d. 14, q.1 a. 3 ad 2m : «[…] eo quod ignis in sua sphaera non lucet, ut a philosophis probatum est».

Thomas de Aquino, *In IV Sent.*, d. 44, q. 3, a. 2 ad 4m : «[…] unde [ignis] non lucet in propria sphaera, ut philosophi dicunt».

Thomas de Aquino, *Expositio super librum Boethii De Trinitate*, q. 4, a. 3 : «[…] dato etiam, ut quidam dicunt quod ignis in propria sphaera non lucet. Lucis enim non est lucere».

Come si vede, Tommaso non parla di Alessandro, ma attribuisce il teorema a non precisati filosofi. In un testo più tardo identificherà il principale portavoce dei filosofi in Mosè Maimonide:

Thomas de Aquino, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 66 a. 1 ad 2m : «Sed Rabbi Moyses, in aliis cum Platone concordans, dicit ignem significari per tenebras; quia, ut dicit, in propria sphaera ignis non lucet».

Si confronti Moses Maimonides *Dux neutrorum* (Parisiis 1520), II, c. 31, f. 60r, 52-54[7] : «Ignis vero primus vocatus est illo nomine [scilicet tenebrae], quia non est lucidus, sed est pervius visui neque comprehenditur ab eo; quia si ignis ille lucidus esset, videremus totum aer de nocte quasi ignem».

In dipendenza probabilmente da Alberto (ma non è escluso che la fonte sia Tommaso), la citazione «Ignis in sphaera sua non lucet» si ritrova in Meister Eckhart, *In Genesim*, I n. 30[8].

Non letterale, ma di tenore simile, una citazione in Ruggero Bacone, *Opus tertium*, 37, 2 : «[…] quod orbis ignis non est lucidus in sphaera sua, sed nec orbes coelestes».

Tracce di una traduzione moerbecana del 1260

La citazione indicata con il n. 4 merita un'analisi dettagliata.

Nel trattato quarto del terzo libro dei *Meteora*, dedicato agli aloni e all'arcobaleno, nel corso del capitolo dodicesimo, Alberto cita Alessandro di Afrodisia.

Alberto spiega che i raggi del sole producono i colori dell'arcobaleno nel modo in cui un raggio si riflette su una superficie liscia e pulita, nell'acqua, nell'aria e in certi tipi di specchio, assumendo il colore di ciò che si trova al di sotto. L'arcobaleno

---

7 Cf. Moses Maimonides. *Dux seu director dubitantium seu perplexorum (Dux neutrorum)*, II, c. 31, ab Iodoco Badio Ascensio, Parisiis 1520 (Nachdruck Minerva, Frankfurt a.M. 1964), f. 60r, 52-54.

8 Magister Eckhardus. *Expositio Libri Genesis secundum recensionem Cod. Oxoniensis Bodleiani Laud. misc. 222 [L]*, ed. L. Sturlese, cap. I, 30, in Meister Eckhart, *Lateinische Werke*, Bd. I, 2, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 2015, p. 83, 10.

però si verifica a patto che si presentino determinate condizioni ambientali, ossia che non ci siano ostacoli nell'aria (cielo terso), e che aria e vapore nel condensarsi formino una nube («tersio aëris humidi et guttularum rorando descendentium a nube»)[9]. La voce di Alessandro è affiancata da quella di un altro commentatore, Alfredo di Shareshill (o Alfredo Anglico), che per primo commentò in latino lo studio di Aristotele sulla meteorologia, e che Alberto sembra conoscere bene[10]:

> Et ad hoc sciendum est *quod* numquam *tersio et splendor* sunt *in aëre et aqua, nisi quando quiescunt* a motu, cuius causam satis bene dicit ALFREDUS inquiens quod *ex quiete partes* aëris et aquae, cum *sint similes, confluunt, et sic exterior superficies fit rotunda et levis recipiens radiorum impressionem ; ex motu* autem fit *contrarium* huius, cum motus sit *quieti* contrarius. Et haec sententia fuit **ALEXANDRI PERIPATETICI** et THEMISTII. Cum ergo sic quiescunt a motu **aër et aqua**, *recipiunt radium* solis in profundum sui; et **refringitur** in ipsis *et redditur corporibus* vicinis et multiplicatur in eis, ex qua multiplicatione luminis *pervenit* multiplicatio et maior claritas colorum[11].

La prima parte del passo, sebbene non segnalato nell'edizione curata da Hossfeld[12], è una citazione letterale del commento di Alfredo di Shareshill al terzo libro dei *Meteora*, in cui l'autore spiega perché l'arcobaleno si verifichi solo in assenza di movimento:

> Intensio[13] et splendor non videntur in aere et aqua nisi quando sunt quieti : **Ex quiete enim partes confluunt cum sint similes, et sic exterior superficies rotunda fit et levis, recipiens radiorum circumflexionem inpressionem; ex motu vero provenit contrarium, cum sit quieti contrarius**[14].

Subito dopo, insieme a Temistio, compare Alessandro, per spiegare che quando l'acqua e l'aria sono in stato di quiete il raggio può penetrarle e rifrangersi, moltiplicandosi e diffondendosi sui corpi circostanti.

---

9 ALBERTUS MAGNUS. *Meteora*, p. 188, 63-64.

10 E. RUBINO, «Nota su una nuova citazione di Alfred di Shareshill nei Meteora di Alberto il Grande», in A. BECCARISI, A. PALAZZO (eds), *Per studium et doctrinam. Fonti e testi di filosofia medievale dal XII al XIV secolo* (Flumen Sapientiae, 6), Roma, Aracne, 2018, p. 125-132.

11 ALBERTUS MAGNUS. *Meteora*, p. 188, 67-79.

12 Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 188, 70-73. Nell'edizione coloniense del testo albertino il commento di Alfredo è erroneamente segnalato come aristotelico, per questa ragione riportato in corsivo, e in nota non compare il riferimento al commento alfrediano. In uno dei manoscritti che tramandano il testo di Alberto, il manoscritto: Erfurt, Universitätsbibliothek, *CA Fol. 31*, f. 187r, è conservata anche la *Translatio vetus* dei *Meteorologica* di Aristotele e la glossa alfrediana è inserita all'interno del testo aristotelico. Sovrascritto si può leggere *glo — sa*, rispettivamente all'inizio e alla fine della glossa alfrediana. L'editore ha erroneamente considerato la glossa alfrediana come un'aggiunta al testo aristotelico.

13 Il termine *intensio* corrisponde in realtà al lemma '*tersio*' nell'edizione del testo aristotelico curata da P. Schoonheim: cf. *Aristotle's Meteorology in the Arabico-Latin Tradition. A Critical Edition of the Texts, with Introduction and Indices,* ed. P. L. SCHOONHEIM, Leiden, Brill, 2000, p. 130, 11-13: «Dico ergo quod tersio et splendor non videntur in aere et aqua nisi quando sunt quieti, quoniam tunc utrique recipiunt radium et reddunt ipsum ad corpora».

14 *Alfred of Sareshel's Commentary on the Metheora of Aristotle*, ed. J. K. OTTE, Leiden, Brill, 1988, p. 52, 6-10.

Il passo, che come detto si trova nel libro terzo trattato quarto di Alberto, è una citazione del libro terzo, capitolo quarto del commento di Alessandro di Afrodisia ai *Meteorologica* di Aristotele, in cui l'esegeta greco tratta dell'arcobaleno e della rifrazione, esattamente come Alberto.

Nel passo aristotelico commentato da Alberto, e più in generale nella traduzione di Gerardo da Cremona dei primi tre libri dei *Meteorologica*, il fenomeno della riflessione viene espresso dai verbi *resplendeo*, *refulgeo*, *reflector*, *reddo ad*, *recipio*. Come provano i passi seguenti :

1) «quando tingitur aliquo colorum *resplendente* in ipso, *reddit* illum colorem ad aliud corporum, quare *resplendet* ille colore in eo, in quo *redditur*, sicut reddit aqua radium *refulgentem* in ea ad aliud corporum»[15].
2) «Dico ergo quod tersio et splendor non videntur in aere et aqua, nisi quando sunt quieti, quoniam tunc utrique *recipiunt* radium et *reddunt* ipsum ad corpora»[16].
3) «Deinde *reflectitur* illud lumen rediens super illum vaporem»[17].

Alberto ricorre invece al verbo *refringo*, che compare quattro volte nel suo commento ai *Meteora*, ma mai negli altri commenti alle opere naturali di Aristotele.

Il termine — che per altro esprime una più matura consapevolezza nei confronti dei fenomeni di *rifrazione* e *riflessione*, assente nel testo aristotelico — si trova proprio nella versione latina del commento di Alessandro di Afrodisia ai *Meteorologica* realizzata da Guglielmo di Moerbeke nel 1260[18], e nella *Translatio nova* dei *Meteorologica* di Aristotele, anche questa moerbecana e probabilmente di poco successiva[19] :

> *Refractus quidem igitur visus ab omnibus videtur planis*, **quia ab omnibus habentibus planam superficiem visus refringitur, et quod sicut ab aqua, sic et ab aere**, ante modicum dixit, quia oportet accipere ex his quae circa visum ostenduntur. Et nunc autem ad sermonem de iride futurum, iterum refractione visus uti. Primo quod visus **refringitur** ab omnibus planis, et non **ab aqua solum, sed et ab aere**, statuit. Erat autem utique verius, et secundum propriam opinionem ipsius dictum, dicere non visum a talibus refringi ad aequales angulos et obiecta visibilium sub tali ipsius refractione sic videre, sed lumen esse refractum a talibus, et cum ipso colores, existentes luminis motivos, ut colorent aliqualiter ipsum; […][20].

---

15 *Aristotle's Meteorology in the Arabico-Latin Tradition*, p. 128, 10-13.
16 *Ibid.*, p. 128, 130,11-13.
17 *Ibid.*, p. 128, 124, 6-7.
18 Alexandre d'Aphrodisias, *Commentaire sur les Météores d'Aristote*, ed. A. J. Smet, Leuven-Paris, Publications Universitaires de Louvain-Éditions Béatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1968, p. vii; J. Brams, W. Vanhamel (eds), *Guillaume de Moerbeke. Recueil d'études à l'occasion du 700e anniversaire de sa mort (1286)*, Leuven, University Press, 1989, p. 309. Cf. Aristoteles. *Meteorologica*. Translatio Guillelmi de Morbeka, ed. G. Vuillemin-Diem (Aristoteles Latinus X 2.1), Turnhout, Brepols, 2008, p. 30-32.
19 *Ibid.*, p. 32.
20 Alexandre d'Aphrodisias, *Commentaire sur les Météores*, p. 232, 52-62.

Dell'ultima occorrenza indicata con il n. 6 ho trattato in una precedente nota[21], pertanto mi limiterò a sintetizzarne qui i principali risultati.

Alberto all'inizio del quarto libro, trattato primo, capitolo primo, afferma di voler trattare della «commistione delle cose semplici» («determinatur de modo commixtionis simplicium»)[22] e delle qualità attive e passive che causano gli elementi. Ricorda di aver già discusso nel libro sulla generazione e la corruzione della capacità del caldo di aggregare le sostanze *homogenia* e del freddo di tenere insieme anche quelle *heterogenia*[23]. Ma tornando sul tema fornisce la spiegazione dei due termini *homogenia* ed *heterogenia,* e chiama Alessandro a confermare le sue parole :

> Dicit tamen **Alexander** quod diffinitio ista, qua dicitur quod **calidum est congregativum homogeniorum et frigidum heterogeniorum**, simpliciter et universaliter intelligitur. *Et hoc probat exemplo, quia si massa una componatur ex auro et argento et plumbo et ferro et lapidibus et in calidum agens proiciatur, calidum dissolvet massam illam et faciet congregari lapides cum lapidibus et aurum cum auro et unumquodque aliorum cum re sui generis*[24].

Il passo di Alessandro è letterale e si trova nel quarto libro, capitolo primo, del commento ai *Meteorologica* : «**calidum quidem enim congregativum homogeneorum dicimus** […] frigidum autem omnium *dicimus congregativum* homogeneorum invicem et alienorum»[25].

Conclusioni

Le due citazioni del commento di Alessandro di Afrodisia ai *Meteorologica*, che compaiono nei *Meteora* di Alberto il Grande, dimostrano che l'autore conosceva e ha utilizzato la traduzione del testo di Alessandro di Afrodisia, conclusa da Guglielmo di Moerbeke nel 1260.

Pertanto, a differenza di quanto sino ad ora proposto dalla critica, i *Meteora* non potranno essere collocati prima di questa data[26].

Né tanto meno si potranno considerare scritti prima del 1257, anno in cui Alberto secondo gli studiosi avrebbe terminato il commento al *De anima*[27], dove il commento

---

21 E. Rubino, «Nota su una nuova citazione di Alfred di Shareshill nei Meteora», p. 125-132.

22 Albertus Magnus. *Meteora*, p. 209, 15-16.

23 Albertus Magnus. *De natura loci, De causis proprietatum elementorum, De generatione et corruptione*, ed. P. Hossfeld (Opera omnia, V, 2), Münster i. W., Aschendorff, 1980, p. 180, 68-84.

24 Albertus Magnus. *Meteora*, p. 211, 16-24.

25 Alexandre d'Aphrodisias, *Commentaire sur les Météores*, p. 284, 69-72.

26 Cf. Albertus Magnus. *Meteora*, p. v-vi; J. A. Weisheipl, *Alberto Magno e le scienze*, Bologna, Edizioni Studio Domenicano, 1994, p. 37; cf. P. Hossfeld, «Der Gebrauch der aristotelischen Übersetzung in den *Meteora* des Albertus Magnus», in *Mediaeval Studies*, 42 (1980), p. 395-406.

27 Cf. Albertus Magnus. *De anima*, ed. C. Stroick (Opera omnia, VII, 1), Münster i.W., Aschendorff, 1968, p. iv-xiii; F. Pelster, «Zur Datierung der Aristotelesparaphrase des hl. Albert des Großen», in *ZKTh,* 56 (1932), p. 423-436; H.-D. Saffrey, «Une brillante conjecture de Saint Albert et la *Recensio Nova* du *De anima*», in *RSPhTh,* 40 (1956), p. 255-263.

ai *Meteora* viene menzionato come già completato («*diximus*/*determinavimus*/habitum est/dicta sunt/*fecimus mentionem … in libro Meteororum*»)[28].

In effetti, già padre Queneau in un articolo del 1954[29] aveva sollevato alcuni dubbi circa la data del 1257 come termine *ante quem* per il commento albertino del *De anima*. Secondo lo studioso tracce della *recensio nova* del *De anima*, compiuta da Guglielmo di Moerbeke non prima del 1261, consentivano infatti di ipotizzare una postdatazione del commento albertino. Sulle argomentazioni di Queneau, respinte con forza da Bernard Geyer[30] e da Clemens Stroick[31], editore del *De anima* di Alberto, tornerò in un successivo lavoro. Tuttavia le citazioni di Alessandro di Afrodisia sin qui esaminate, consentendo di spostare la redazione dei *Meteora* di Alberto dopo il 1260, ripropongono — a parere di chi scrive — anche il problema della datazione del *De anima* e più in generale delle opere albertine, mai definitivamente risolto.

28 Cf. Albertus Magnus. *De anima*, p. 55, 9; 58, 88; 89, 75; 93, 61; 95, 62; 103, 54; 114, 61; 121, 28; 122, 12; 123, 5; 124, 25.

29 G. Queneau, «Origine de la sentence 'Intellectus speculativus extensione fit practicus' et date du Commentaire du *De anima* de Saint Albert le Grand», in *RTAM*, 21 (1954), p. 307-312.

30 B. Geyer, «Die von Albertus Magnus in *De anima* benutzte Aristotelesübersetzung und die Datierung dieser Schrift», in *RTAM*, 22 (1955), p. 322-326.

31 Albertus Magnus. *De anima*, p. v-vii.

LUIGI SILVANO

(Pseudo-)Alexander of Aphrodisias between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance

Notes on the Afterlife of the Medical Puzzles and Natural Problems*

The Collection and its Renaissance Readers

Besides being known as an Aristotelian commentator, Alexander of Aphrodisias was appreciated during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance as the author of a collection of *Medical Puzzles and Natural Problems*. This attribution is now universally considered wrong, and the chronology of the text is highly disputed. Most probably, it is the work of a compiler active in the late Roman period[1]. In the fuller copies, it comprises 228 short chapters in the form of questions and answers; these are devoted to several issues pertaining to the realms of medicine, human and animal physiology, dietetics, and, to a lesser extent, physics, astronomy, botany, meteorology.

Pseudo-Alexander's *problemata* are modeled on those by (Pseudo-)Aristotle, which "set the standard for the genre"[2]. The two collections, which were often

* I warmly thank Pietro B. Rossi for inviting me to present a paper at the conference in memory of Paolo Accattino and to contribute to this volume.

1 The oldest manuscript copies of the full collection date from the thirteenth century. However, abridged versions of it are attested in manuscripts no later than the twelfth century. The only modern edition available of Pseudo-Alexander's problems is that by J. L. Ideler, *Physici et Medici Graeci Minores*, I, Berlin, G. Reimerus, 1841, p. 3-80 (henceforth: Ideler), on which see L. Silvano, "Un'edizione da rifare: i *Problemata* dello Pseudo-Alessandro di Afrodisia", *Philologia Antiqua* 10 (2017) [*re vera* 2018], p. 19-29; for a *status quaestionis* on the relationship between this and other collections attributed to Pseudo-Alexander see also the introduction in S. Kapetanaki, R. W. Sharples (eds), Pseudo-Aristoteles (Pseudo-Alexander), *Supplementa Problematorum*, Berlin-New York, De Gruyter, 2006.

2 A. Blair, "The *Problemata* as a Natural Philosophical Genre", in A. Grafton, N. Siraisi (eds), *Natural Particulars: Nature and the Disciplines in Renaissance Europe*, Cambridge, Mass. — London, The MIT Press, 1999, p. 171-204, esp. 173; at p. 173-174, Blair provides a convenient definition of the "very peculiar kind of question and answer" found in Pseudo-Aristotle's (which applies to Pseudo-Alexander's as well) problems: "the question, in διὰ τί (why?), asks not about the existence or nature of a fact, but

Luigi Silvano • Università degli Studi di Torino, luigi.silvano@unito.it

Alexander of Aphrodisias in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, ed. by Pietro B. Rossi, Matteo Di Giovanni, and Andrea A. Robiglio, Turnhout, 2021 (*Studia Artistarum*, 45), p. 117-144
© BREPOLS PUBLISHERS
10.1484/M.SA-EB.5.120540

copied together in manuscripts, became available to Western scholars as early as the late thirteenth century, thanks to the translations by Bartholomew of Messina and Evrart de Conty (Pseudo-Aristotle's), and by Petrus de Abano (Pseudo-Alexander's, dated 1302). From this time onwards, there is evidence of their use in university teaching, and they are quoted as authoritative sources in several writings, especially encyclopedias, *summae* and *florilegia*[3]. However, both works reached their peak of popularity in the early Renaissance, at the time of the revival of Greek studies in Europe, thanks to a new wave of Latin translations: the most influential was that by the Greek émigré Theodore Gaza, accomplished in 1453, which soon became the standard text for the two collections, and had a notable manuscript circulation, before going into the press: the first edition of his version of the Aristotelian *Problemata* was published in 1475; his version of Pseudo-Alexander's *Problemata* came out in 1501. In the following decades there were several reprints of both. As to the Greek original, the *editio princeps* of both collections is found in the fourth tome of the Aldine Aristotle of 1497. Other Latin translations were produced after Gaza's (see below), and vernacular translations as well[4].

The diffusion of Pseudo-Aristotle's and Pseudo-Alexander's collections and their translations gave impulse to the revival of the *problemata* literature as a medium of scientific popularization. New collections of problems were composed in Latin and in the vernacular languages. The success of this question-and-answer literature was not only due to the fact that it offered brief and accessible treatments of the causes of medical diseases and natural phenomena, be they real or not (for instance: "Why do meat that has been exposed to moonbeams decay more rapidly than that which has been exposed to sunbeams?") but also to the fact that they provided answers

---

about the cause of a fact that is presumed so well known that it is not even stated before it is explained. However bizarre the 'fact' may seem to us, the *problema* never includes discussion of its veracity but only of its cause. As Helmut Flashar describes it, in its characteristic form the question poses an apparent paradox […]; the answer, characteristically formulated in one or more hypothetical suggestions, resolves the apparent contradiction by upholding the principles that had seemed to be violated in the first place and by introducing distinctions of quantity, quality, or other well-known categories. […] The resolution of *problemata* involves the manipulation of the common pool of Aristotelian and Hippocratic notions about nature and human physiology: humors and qualities, phenomena of antiperistasis (or opposition), concoction, sympathy, and the like".

3 On the diffusion and impact of these translations see I. Ventura, "*Aristoteles fuit causa efficiens huius libri*: On the reception of Pseudo-Aristotle's *Problemata* in Late Medieval encyclopaedic culture", in M. Goyens, P. De Leemans (eds), *Aristotle's Problemata in Different Times and Tongues*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2006, p. 113-144; *Ead.*, "Translating, Commenting, Re-translating: The Medical Sections of the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Problemata* and Their Readers", in M. Goyens, A. Smets, P. De Leemans (eds), *Science Translated / La Science en Traduction: Proceeding of the International Congress Leuven (May 26-29, 2004)*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2008, p. 123-154; *Ead.*, "Peter of Abano on Botany and Pharmacology", in P. De Leemans, M. F. Hoenen (eds), *Philosophy between Text and Tradition: Peter of Abano and the Reception of Aristotle's* Problemata physica *in the Middle Ages*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2016, p. 163-200.

4 For instance M. Heret, *Les Problèmes d'Alexandre Aphrodisé… traduits de Grec en Francois*, Paris, pour Guillaume Guillard, 1555.

for every sort of curiosity and mirabilia (for instance: "Why are taller people more stupid than the shorter?")[5].

A great deal of this literature depends on the ancient collections attributed to Aristotle and Alexander, and cannot be fully understood and appreciated without referring to them. For instance, Alessandro Tassoni derives from Pseudo-Alexander several questions included in his *Pensieri diversi* (definitive edition 1620)[6]: in the problem entitled "Perché i castrati habbiano la voce più acuta che gli altri huomini" (Why do castrated men have higher voices than other men) he overtly refers to "Alessandro Afrodiseo nell'ottavo Problema del primo libro"; in the problem on "Perché quelli che si vergognano tengano gli occhi bassi" (Why do people feeling shame cast their eyes down) he refers to "Alessandro nel 70. del primo libro de' suoi Problemi"; again, in a problem on "Why does the sun solidify clay but melt wax" he refers to "Alessandro Afrodiseo nel problema 89 del primo Libro", although this time criticizing Alexander's explanation as superficial ("sovra pettine")[7].

As an example of the influence of the ancient collections of *problemata* in general, and Pseudo-Alexander's in particular, on Renaissance medical literature, one can refer to the illustrious physician Girolamo Mercuriale, who quotes Alexander as an authority in his influential university lectures on otiatrics[8] — nothing to be

---

5 One of the most successful works of this kind is Girolamo Manfredi's *Liber de homine*, better known as the *Perché* (Bologna 1474), a true bestseller, with dozens of editions in the last decades of the fifteenth century. The following centuries saw the publication of the collections assembled by Marco Antonio Zimara (*Problemata*, published posthumous: first edition Basel 1540), Leonardo Giacchini (*Quaestiones naturales*, Lyons 1540), Girolamo Garimberto (*Problemi naturali e morali*, Venice 1550), Ortensio Lando (*Quattro libri de dubbi*, Venice 1552), Alessandro Tassoni (*Quesiti e risposte*, Modena 1608 [partial edition]; *Varietà di pensieri*, Modena 1612; for the second edition, entitled *Pensieri diversi*, see the following note), F. Bayle (*Problemata physica et medica*, Toulouse 1677). The decline of the genre begins in the seventeenth century, paralleled by the scientific discoveries in the fields of medicine, anatomy, entomology, physics and by the emergence of a newly founded scientific literature. John Donne' *Paradoxs and Problems* (1633) is emblematic of the evolution of this genre into paradoxography. Donne's questions are often weird and ironical: for instance n. 7 "Why hath the common opinion afforded women souls?" (the final answer is: "we have given women souls only to make them capable of damnation"), n. 15 "Why Puritans make long sermons?" (the solution is: "I think they do it out of a zealous imagination that it is their duty to preach on till their auditory wake again"). For a survey of this literature see P. Cherchi, "Il quotidiano, i *Problemata* e la meraviglia: ministoria di un microgenere", in *Id.*, *Ministorie di microgeneri*, ed. C. Fabbian, A. Rebonato, E. Zanotti Carney, Ravenna, Longo Editore, 2003, p. 11-40; *Id.*, "I *Dubbi* di Ortensio Lando in inglese erroneamente attribuiti ad Alain Chartier", *ibid.*, p. 41-48.; A. Carré, L. Cifuentes, "Girolamo Manfredi's *Il Perché*: I. The *Problemata* and its medieval tradition", in *Medicina & Storia*, 10 (2010), p. 13-38.

6 A. Tassoni, *Dieci libri di Pensieri diversi*, Carpi, Girolamo Vaschieri, 1620, v 19, p. 175.

7 See, respectively, *probl.* i.8, i.70, and i.89 in Ideler's edition.

8 *De aurium affectibus praelectiones*, in Hieronymus Mercurialis, *Tractatus De compositione medicamentorum, De morbis oculorum et aurium* [...] a Michaele Columbo editi, Venetiis, apud Iuntas, 1590 (cf. *EDIT 16*-Censimento Nazionale delle Cinquecentine [hereafter *CNCE*] 28148), p. 50: "Alexander I probl. med. 71 conatus est huius rei causam explicare, ubi quaerens, cur aures omnes alios sustinent liquores, aquam vero non possint, ait eam esse causam, quia aqua sua fluxibilitate sese in meatum auditorium insinuat [...]" (cf. *probl.* i.71 Ideler).

surprised at, for Mercuriale was the dedicatee of the 1585 Frankfurt edition of the *Problemata* by Friedrich Sylburg[9].

Another example is provided by Girolamo Fracastoro, who tacitly uses Pseudo-Alexander's preface to Book I as a blueprint for several sections of his treatise *On Sympathy and Antipathy*. For instance, Fracastoro derives from Pseudo-Alexander the theoretical premises concerning the scope and use of *problemata* and their application to the study of natural phenomena, as well as their classification into three categories: 1) those not requiring any form of demonstration, as their solution is self-evident; 2) those whose solution goes beyond human intellect, and are therefore knowable only to God; and 3) those in the middle, i.e. real research questions that can be posed and answered[10].

Whether those Renaissance philosophers and scientists who cited or tacitly reemployed Pseudo-Alexander's *problemata* had access to the text in the original (as was probably the case with a Hellenist as Mercuriale) or via translations (as was possibly the case with Fracastoro) is a question that cannot be answered with certainty. This is due to the lack of a critical edition of the Greek text and of modern editions of its medieval and Renaissance translations[11], and studies thereon as well. As can be seen, there is still much work to do in order to assess the real impact of those translations on contemporary philosophical and medical literature and scientific culture in general[12].

This article shall first briefly present three humanist translations of Pseudo-Alexander's collection: those by Theodore Gaza (ca. 1408-1475), Giorgio Valla (1447-1500), and Angelo Poliziano (1454-1494) (paragraph 2). None of these has been up to now the object of specific studies, and all three are in need of better editions than the available ones, i.e. the same old prints used by Renaissance scholars. The second part of the paper (paragraph 3) shall offer a case study concerning a comparison of these translations, with respect to the preface of Pseudo-Alexander's Book I — the

---

9 Ἀριστοτέλους, Ἀλεξάνδρου τε καὶ Κασίου προβλήματα σὺν Θεοφραστείων τινῶν ἐκλογαῖς, Frankfurt, apud heredes Andreae Wecheli, 1585 (*VD16* A 1768).

10 See Girolamo Fracastoro, *De sympathia et antipathia rerum*, ed. C. Pennuto, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2008, p. 8: "Causarum enim cum quaedam universalissimae sint et remotissimae a rebus, quaedam vero propinquiores et particulares magis, ac demum quaedam propinquissimae et propriae: proprias quidem et propinquissimas in reconditis et difficilibus attigisse aut Dei certe est aut divini; universalissimis vero stare ignavi et rustici ingenii est; medias vero inquirere et ad proprias niti (quantum homini datur) philosophi certe est".

11 These are all listed in F. E. Cranz, "Alexander Aphrodisiensis", in P. O. Kristeller (ed.), *Catalogus translationum et commentariorum: Mediaeval and Renaissance Latin Translations and Commentaries* [henceforth: *CTC*], I, Washington, D.C., The Catholic University of America Press, 1960, p. 77-135; see also *Id.*, "Alexander Aphrodisiensis. Addenda et corrigenda", in P. O. Kristeller, F. E. Cranz (eds), *CTC*, II, 1971, p. 411-422; and C. Vecce, "Alexander Aphrodisiensis. Addenda", in V. Brown, P. O. Kristeller, F. E. Cranz (eds), *CTC*, VII (1992), p. 296-299.

12 For instance, as it has been noted, "the influence Gaza's vocabulary exercised on the choices made by the biologists of the Renaissance" is "a field of research [...] virtually untouched" (P. Beullens, A. Gotthelf, "Theodore Gaza's Translation of Aristotle's *De Animalibus*: Content, Influence, and Date", in *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, 47 [2007], p. 469-513: 505).

only portion of the text for which a critical edition is available at present[13]; the three texts are offered in a synoptic edition in the Appendix.

Three Humanist Translations of Pseudo-Alexander's *Problemata*

Theodore Gaza (1453)

Gaza's translations of (Pseudo-)Aristotle's and Pseudo-Alexander's *Problemata* had been commissioned by Pope Nicholas V. In an epistle to the latter sent from Trebizond, Gaza affirms that he found a manuscript containing both collections: this so far unidentified copy might have been the exemplar he used for his translation[14]. Gaza's translation comprehends Pseudo-Alexander's books I and II, with the omission of some items, plus some problems pertaining to the so-called *Supplementa problematorum* collection, which is attributed in the manuscripts to either Alexander or Aristotle[15]. His translation has come down in at least five manuscripts, including the dedication copy to Pope Nicholas V. An indirect witness of its circulation in the fourth quarter of the fifteenth century is provided by Valla's and Poliziano's translations, which seemingly depend on it, as we will see. It was printed for the first time in 1501[16], and then extensively reprinted in Italy and Europe well into the seventeenth century.

In the dedication epistle to Pope Nicholas V, Gaza admits that although these *problemata* contain clever discussions on various arguments, he does not believe that they are the work of the real Alexander of Aphrodisias, due to divergences in doctrine with other genuine works of Alexander, for instance concerning the issue of human soul; moreover, their language and style are ostensibly different from those of their supposed author. For these reasons, Gaza suggests that the author might be much more recent (*multo recentior*) than the historical Alexander. All this notwithstanding, he maintains that these problems are useful and worth reading.[17]

Gaza's translation technique has been analyzed, with respect to his version of the Pseudo-Aristotelian *problemata*, by John Monfasani and Pierre Louis. According to the latter, it has two main faults: first, it indulges in pleonasms (which is indeed a

13 L. Silvano, "Studiare la natura per problemi: il proemio al primo libro dei *Dubbi medici e problemi fisici* dello Pseudo-Alessandro di Afrodisia", *Seminari romani di cultura greca*, n.s. 7 (2018), p. 89-106.

14 Cranz, "Alexander Aphrodisiensis", p. 128.

15 See *ibid*. for the detail of problems included in the translation.

16 The first edition was published by Bonetus Locatellus in Venice, in 1501 (*EDIT 16* CNCE 35606 = *USTC* 800140), and later reprinted by Aldus Manutius in 1503-1504 (Aristoteles, *Historia animalium*, *De partibus animalium*, *De generatione animalium*. Theophrastus, *Historia plantarum*, *De causis plantarum*. Alexander Aphrodisiensis, *Problemata*, Theodoro Gaza interprete, Venetiis, Aldus Manutius: *EDIT 16* CNCE 2871 = *USTC* 810862. I have consulted the copy of this edition preserved at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Rés. 4-Z ADLER-6). No less than 28 editions came out in the sixteenth century: see M. Cortesi, S. Fiaschi (eds), *Repertorio delle traduzioni umanistiche a stampa: Secoli XV-XVI*, 2 vols., Firenze, SISMEL — Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2008, I, p. 68-73.

17 Ed. Venetiis 1503-1504, V, f. L iiiir.

common feature of medieval and humanist translations); second, in several instances it looks more like a paraphrase than a translation — which fact also undermines the possibility of tracing back with absolute certainty his manuscript sources[18]. As to Monfasani, however, Gaza "did more than paraphrase. He significantly altered the text […]; in Gaza's mind, to translate the received text of Aristotle was senseless. First of all, all the manuscripts were corrupt […]; second, […] the received structure and even the very words of any Aristotelian text were an historical accident produced by an incompetent editor"[19]. Gaza thus felt entitled to make changes, even radical ones, such as altering the order of passages in the text and revising its style and form: to sum up, while "commissioned to make a translation, he produced instead a new edition of the Greek text"[20]. Similar attitudes toward the text are displayed in his translation of *De animalibus*, overtly aimed at restoring the text "to the form the philosopher had originally given it" by means of "substantial changes *ad mentem Aristotelis*"[21]. The same can be observed in his translation of Pseudo-Alexander's *problemata*, as we will see.

Gaza has also his merits, for, as he himself proclaims in the preface of his translation, he made efforts to "transform the traditional scientific vocabulary into proper Latin by substituting the calques or transliterated words of the medieval translations with proper Latin expressions: *pituita* instead of *phlegma*, *laxum intestinum* instead of *colon*, *rationis victus* instead of *dieta*"[22], and so on.

Giorgio Valla (1466, 1488)

According to the authoritative opinion of Eugenio Garin, Giorgio Valla from Piacenza can be considered one of the most important personalities in the history of science in the early Renaissance[23]. Indeed he is a key figure in order to understand the successful blend of philosophy, literature and scientific culture promoted by humanists like Ermolao Barbaro, Angelo Poliziano, Niccolò Leoniceno and others[24]. Valla executed the translation around 1466, when he was a student in Pavia, upon

---

18 Aristote. *Problèmes*, ed. P. Louis, I, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1991, p. xlvii.

19 J. Monfasani, "The PseudoAristotelian *Problemata* and Aristotle's *De Animalibus* in the Renaissance", in Grafton, Siraisi (eds), *Natural Particulars*, p. 208-209.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 210. See also *Id.*, "George of Trebizond's Critique of Theodore Gaza's Translation of the Aristotelian *Problemata*", in Goyens, De Leemans (eds), *Aristotle's* Problemata, p. 275-294.

21 Beullens, Gotthelf, "Theodore Gaza's Translation of Aristotle's *De Animalibus*", p. 471.

22 Monfasani, "George of Trebizond's Critique of Theodore Gaza's Translation", p. 276-277.

23 Cf. E. Garin, *L'Età Nuova. Ricerche di storia della cultura dal xii al xvi secolo*, Napoli, Morano, 1969, p. 498.

24 V. Branca, "Premessa", in *Id.* (ed.), *Giorgio Valla tra scienza e sapienza*, Firenze, Olschki, 1981, p. 7. On Valla's translations from scientific texts see G. Gardenal, "Giorgio Valla e le scienze esatte", *ibid.*, p. 9-54; on Valla's use of the *Problemata* as sources for his encyclopedia see P. Landucci Ruffo, "Le fonti della 'Medicina' nell'enciclopedia di Giorgio Valla", *ibid.*, p. 55-68. For further bibliography and information on Valla as a translator see E. Guerrieri, "Georgius Valla", in *C.A.L.M.A. — Compendium Auctorum Latinorum Medii Aevi (500-1500)*, IV.2, SISMEL — Edizioni del Galluzzo, Firenze 2012, p. 213-236; A.A. Raschieri, "Giorgio Valla, Editor and Translator of Ancient Scientific Texts", in P. Olmos (ed.), *Greek*

request by one of his teachers, Giovanni Marliani, to whom he dedicated it[25]. The text survives in the presentation copy, a manuscript now held at the Biblioteca Laurenziana in Florence (*Plut. 84.14*). More than twenty years later, Valla issued a revised edition, which was printed in Venice in 1488-1489[26], and apparently did not enjoy a significant circulation[27]. This edition not only provided a somewhat amended text, but also a rudimental apparatus of *comparanda*, in the form of passages from other authors printed along the main text (see illustration 2 and the *apparatus* in the Appendix).

Though he must have known Gaza's translation, as we will see, Valla does not elaborate on Gaza's denying the authenticity of the *problemata*. In his preface to the text, instead, he provides some general thoughts on medicine and on the usefulness of the question-and-answer method for researching the causes of various natural phenomena. Furthermore, he explains that he preferred to maintain in his title the widely diffused Greek word *problemata*, for Latin terms such as *proposita*, *ambiguitates* or *quaestiones* would not serve as precise equivalents of it.[28]

Angelo Poliziano (1479)[29]

Poliziano's Greek studies encompass an extraordinary variety of authors and literary genres, including medical literature. From a letter to his patron Lorenzo de' Medici dated June 5, 1490, we know that he had accomplished translations of some works by Galen and Hippocrates, though he had not finished them yet[30]. Probably

---

Science in the Long Run. Essays on the Greek Scientific Tradition (4th c. BCE – 17th c. CE), Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012, p. 127-149; and L. Silvano, "Una scheda per Giorgio Valla traduttore (Callimaco, *epigr*. 23 Pfeiffer)", *Studi medievali e umanistici*, 16 (2018), p. 243-254.

25 Marliani, a renowned scholar in the fields of mathematics and physics, taught medicine and astrology in Pavia from 1452 onwards. See F. M. Vaglienti, "Marliani, Giovanni", in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 70 (2008), s.v. (online version). 'Alexander Aphrodisiensis' is often quoted, together with several other ancient and Byzantine Greek physicians, in the medical sections of Valla's encyclopedic work *De expetendis and fugiendis rebus* (Venice 1501).

26 Alexander Aphrodiseus, *Problemata* [tr. Georgius Valla]. Aristoteles, *Problemata* [tr. Theodorus Gaza]. Plutarchus, *Problemata* [tr. Johannes Petrus Lucensis], Venetiis, Antonius de Strata, de Cremona, 1488-1489 (*ISTC* ia00387000 = *USTC* 998000).

27 The first and only reprint was probably in the volume containing Gaza's translation of Pseudo-Aristoteles' *Problemata* and Gian Pietro da Lucca's translations of Plutarch's *Problemata* (= *Quaestiones Graecae*), Venetiis, per Albertinum Vercellensem [Albertino da Lessona], 26.5.1501 (*ISTC* ia00387500 = *EDIT 16 CNCE* 1033 = *USTC* 800139). See Cortesi, Fiaschi (eds), *Repertorio delle traduzioni umanistiche a stampa*, I, p. 77.

28 Alexander Aphrodiseus, *Problemata* [tr. Georgius Valla], V, f. a iirv. On Valla's translation see Cranz, "Alexander Aphrodisiensis", p. 130-132; Cortesi, Fiaschi (eds), *Repertorio delle traduzioni umanistiche a stampa*, I, p. 77; E. Guerrieri, "Georgius Valla", p. 226.

29 On Poliziano as translator, see the brief but helpful survey by M. Accame, *Poliziano traduttore di Atanasio. L'"Epistola ad Marcellinum"*, Tivoli, TORED, 2012, p. 7-51 (with bibliography).

30 The letter is nr. 29 in I. Del Lungo, *Prose volgari inedite e poesie latine e greche edite e inedite di Angelo Ambrogini Poliziano*, Firenze, Barbèra, 1867; here, p. 77, Poliziano also refers to his own commentary appended to these translations, in which he would explain "all medical terms of Greek origin, and suggest Latin equivalents for each of them"; then Poliziano asks Lorenzo to have the translation revised by his

Poliziano never managed to revise them, and did not want to divulge them in a provisional state. Unfortunately, so far no trace of these translations has been found in Poliziano's *zibaldoni*, or elsewhere. That of Pseudo-Alexander's *Problemata* is therefore his only translation left of scientific works. It was accomplished during summer 1479, as we learn from an epistle to Pandolfo Collenuccio dated August 5 of that year. In the same months, while residing in the suburban villa of Lorenzo de' Medici in Fiesole,[31] he also translated Epictetus' *Encheiridion* (Manual) and Plutarch's *Amatoriae narrationes*. Four years later, in a letter dated May 12, 1483, Poliziano wrote back to his close friend Giovanni Pico, who had requested him his Latin translations, that he would be pleased to send his Epictetus, but not the rest of these writings, which did not deserve to come to light[32]. This severe judgment might also include the translation of the *Problemata*, although not specifically mentioned. In the following years Poliziano sporadically quoted the *Problemata* in his university lectures and in his *Miscellanea*, but apparently never decided to continue his translation (which does not comprehend book II), nor to refine it[33]. Finally, his former pupils Pietro Del Riccio Baldi (*alias* Crinitus) and Alessandro Sarti decided to include it in the *editio princeps* of Politian's *Opera*, published posthumously by Aldus in Venice, in 1498[34]. This edition does not represent his last will, nor can it be checked against his autograph draft, which has not survived.

The translation included in this lavishly printed edition covers only the first book of Pseudo-Alexander's collection, comprised of 151 problems. It is doubtful whether Poliziano did also translate book II, or not. Indeed, this was the opinion Crinito expressed in a 1497 letter to Giovanni Francesco Pico (1469-1533), nephew of Giovanni the Mirandulanus, which is printed as an afterword to Poliziano's translation in the Aldine edition. Crinito says that he had hesitated before publishing this translation, first because there were already two translations available, those by Gaza and Valla, and publishing a new one could not be worth the effort; second, because the translation was unfinished, and its publication in its present form might

---

personal physician, "maestro Pier Lione" (1445 ca.-1492); see F. Bacchelli, "Leoni, Pietro", in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 64 (2005), s.v. (online version); see also Accame, *Poliziano traduttore di Atanasio*, p. 40-41.

31 On the dating of the translation see S. Gentile, "Poliziano, Ficino, Andronico Callisto e la traduzione del *Carmide* platonico", in V. Fera, M. Martelli (eds), *Agnolo Poliziano poeta, scrittore, filologo*, Firenze, Le Lettere, 1998, p. 365-385: 367; and C. Malta, "Le *Amatoriae Narrationes* del Poliziano", in F. Bausi, V. Fera (eds), *Laurentia Laurus. Per Mario Martelli*, Messina, Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Umanistici, 2004, p. 161-210, especially 163-166.

32 See Polit. *Epist.* I 4: "reliqui, quos petis, negant ferre lucem" (= Angelo Poliziano, *Letters: Volume 1, Books 1-4*, ed. and trans. S. Butler, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2006, p. 18-19).

33 For instance, when commenting on Persius, *Sat.* 3, 80, OBSTIPO, a term which is also referred to animals having their head bowed down, he says: "Alexander Aphrodisius quaerit in Problematis suis cur prudentiores sint qui incurvo capite incedunt quam qui erecto" (Angelo Poliziano, *Commento inedito alle satire di Persio*, ed. L. Cesarini Martinelli, R. Ricciardi, Firenze, Olschki, 1985, p. 93, 479-481; cf. Pseudo-Alex. *probl.* i. 27 Ideler = i.28 according to Poliziano's translation).

34 Angelus Politianus. *Omnia opera et alia quaedam lectu digna*, Venetiis, in Aedibus Aldi Romani, 1498 (*ISTC* ip00886000 = *USTC* 991842).

compromise the memory of Poliziano: if the author had had time to revise his work, it would have resulted in a more sound and polite version ("pleniora essent haec omnia atque decoctiora"). In the end, however, Crinito was persuaded to publish it by Giovan Francesco, and by the latter's teacher and court physician, the illustrious scholar Giovanni Mainardi[35]. Crinitus also criticizes Gaza's skepticism about the book's authorship, for the tradition is unanimous in attibuting it to Alexander.

Poliziano's translation was then reprinted several times both within new editions of his writings and in collections of problems, by Aristotle and others[36].

Identifying the manuscript(s) of Pseudo-Alexander used by Poliziano is no easy task. First of all, the sequence of the *Problemata* in his translation does not correspond to any of those given in the known Greek codices of Pseudo-Alexander: this might, of course, be due to an intentional alteration of the questions' order made by the translator, or to accidental factors, like the misplacement of some folia occurred during the passage of the humanist's papers to his pupils. Poliziano's manuscript source was surely not MS Laurentianus 71.33, which had been indicated as a possible candidate by Ida Maïer[37] (a codex which the humanist bought from Marsilio Ficino, as an autograph note points out at f. 208v, however probably after he had translated the text), nor any of the other MSS of the *Problemata* now at the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana. Poliziano probably made use of Gaza's translation, as textual similarities between the two seem to suggest (see below)[38].

---

35 D. Mugnai Carrara, "Mainardi, Giovanni", in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 67 (2006), s.v. (online version).

36 See Cranz, "Alexander Aphrodisiensis", p. 132-133; Accame, *Poliziano traduttore di Atanasio*, p. 41-42; Malta, "Le *Amatoriae Narrationes* del Poliziano", p. 181-182. Cortesi, Fiaschi (eds), *Repertorio delle traduzioni umanistiche a stampa*, I, p. 73-77, have listed 35 prints between 1498 and 1589.

37 I. Maïer, *Ange Politien. La formation d'un poète humaniste (1469-1480)*, Genève, Droz, p. 380; this suggestion is registered, without comments, by Malta, "Le *Amatoriae Narrationes* del Poliziano", p. 167 n. 1. Indeed there are various reasons to exclude Maïer's hypothesis: first of all, the codex *Laurentianus* does not contain the preface to Book I, which Poliziano translated; second, it contains Pseudo-Alexander's problems (at ff. 147r-187v) in a sequence that resemble that of Ideler's edition, but not that of Poliziano's translation (for instance, in Poliziano's translation problem i.83 Ideler is placed instead of i.10 Ideler; Poliziano does not translate problem i.14; he translates problems i.67 and i.68 instead of problem i.19, and problems i.54-55-56 instead of i.23-24-25 Ideler; and so on); moreover, there are also textual discrepancies (for instance at *probl.* i.16 Ideler the Laurentianus has a lacuna due to *saut du même au même*, from λυχνιάᾳ φλογί to λυχνιάᾳ φλογί, while Poliziano translates this passage). Also to be excluded is Ms. *Laur. plut.* 75.13 (ff. 121r-141v), for it omits the preface to Book I and the first problem of the same book, both translated by Poliziano; furthermore, the sequence of problems in this manuscript does not correspond to that of Poliziano.

38 I will not tackle here the issue of the later criticism of Poliziano on Gaza's translation of Aristotle's *Problemata*, which is the subject of a famous chapter (90) in the *centuria prima* of his *Miscellanea*: see J. Monfasani, "Angelo Poliziano, Aldo Manuzio, Theodore Gaza, George of Trebizond and Chapter 90 of the *Miscellaneorum Centuria Prima*", in A. Mazzocco (ed.), *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism*, Leiden, Brill, 2006, p. 243-265; reprinted in J. Monfasani, *Renaissance Humanism, From The Middle Ages to Modern Times*, Farnham–Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2015, nr. VIII.

Case Study: A Comparison of Gaza's, Valla's, and Poliziano's Translations of the Preface to Book I of Pseudo-Alexander's *Problemata*

In the following, I attempt a first assessment and comparison of the three translations presented above. Needless to say, the first step in order to properly evaluate a translator's work is to ascertain what text exactly he is translating from. In the case of Pseudo-Alexander's *Problemata*, the only portion of the text critically edited, and thus the only whose manuscript transmission has received some attention up to present, is the preface to Book I[39]. For this reason, I decided to confine my analysis of the three translations to this part of the text. The observations that follow can be verified by looking at the Appendix, where I have aligned in four parallel columns the Greek text (I) and the translations by Gaza (II), Valla (III), and Poliziano (IV).

The Translators' Manuscript Sources

My collation of the preface to Book I allows to ascertain that all three translations depend from the same branch of tradition attested by the following *codices*: **B** = *Bonon. Bibl. Univ.* 3635 (fourteenth century); **L** = *Lond. Harl.* 6295 (sixteenth century); $\mathbf{M_4}$ = *Marc. gr.* Z. 259 (coll. 892; fourteenth century); $\mathbf{Mu_3}$ = *Mutin. Bibl. Est.* α P 5.17 (gr. 115 Puntoni; fourteenth century); $\mathbf{P_4}$ = *Par. Coislin* 332 (fifteenth century)[40]. This is proved by the following passages in which our translations refer to words or clauses which are solely attested in $\mathbf{BLM_4Mu_3P_4}$ and omitted in the rest of the tradition:

— §4 τινά $\mathbf{BLM_4Mu_3P_4}$: *nonnulla* Gaza : *nonnullas* Valla : *quasdam* Poliziano;
— §7 ταῦτα τοίνυν αὐτόθεν ἐστὶ γνώριμα $\mathbf{BLM_4Mu_3P_4}$: *certa manifestaque est* Gaza : *haec nimirum per sese sunt cognita* Valla : *haec itaque suapte natura nota sunt* Poliziano;
— §7 ἰδιότητες ἀπόρρητοι $\mathbf{BLM_4Mu_3P_4}$: ἰδιότητες ἄρρητοι *reliqui* ("unsaid, unsayable properties"[41])]: *abditae… delitescentesque causae* Gaza : *occultae proprietates* Valla : *proprietates arcanae* Poliziano.

In three more instances, Valla and Poliziano follow $\mathbf{BLM_4Mu_3P_4}$, whilst Gaza seems to stick to the text of the *vulgata*:

— §3 καθάπερ ἐν κιβωτίῳ $\mathbf{BLM_4Mu_3P_4}$: καθάπερ ἐν κιβωτῷ *reliqui*: both Valla and Poliziano clearly depend on an exemplar with the diminutive form, for the former gives *tanquam in arcula aliqua*, and the latter has *quasi intra scriniolum* (Gaza omits this clause, possibly on purpose: see below);

39 See Silvano, "Studiare la natura per problemi".
40 For these *sigla* see *ibid.*, p. 97.
41 On this concept see M. Meeusen, "Ps.-Alexander of Aphrodisias on Unsayable Properties in *Medical Puzzles and Natural Problems*" in M. Meeusen, E. Gielen (eds), *Where does it Hurt? Ancient Medicine in Questions and Answers*, Leiden–Boston, Brill, in press.

— §6 ἀπειθοῦσι is an addition of **BLM$_4$Mu$_3$P$_4$**, translated by Valla (*non admittunt*) and Poliziano (*non credunt*), but omitted by Gaza;
— §13 the best manuscripts read χρὴ τοίνυν προβάλλειν εἰς ζήτησιν τὰ μέσην ἔχοντα χώραν, ἀμφίβολά τε πρὸς γνῶσιν, οἷά τε πρὸς λύσιν ὑποπεσεῖν, i.e. "We must then propose for investigation problems that occupy a middle ground and that are doubtful in respect of knowledge, and such that can be subject to a solution"[42]. Manuscript **BLM$_4$Mu$_3$P$_4$** read καὶ μὴ ἀμφίβολα instead of the correct ἀμφίβολά τε (or the equally acceptable ἀμφίβολα δέ of other manuscripts), thus affirming the opposite of what the text was meant to say: in fact, Pseudo-Alexander is explaining that one must investigate problems revolving on real ambiguities, i.e. that can be solved in one way or in the opposite; reading "not ambiguous" would result in a nonsense. Both Valla's and Poliziano's exemplars might have contained this textual variant, as the former translates … *eorum minime ambigua sint*, while the latter has *neque ad cognoscendum ancipitia sunt*. Gaza's version gives the correct sense: thus, either he had a manuscript with a good reading, or he understood that μή was an interpolation and tacitly rectified the text.

Though presently it is not possible to individuate with precision the exemplars used by Gaza and Poliziano, a couple of *errores coniunctivi* allow to surmise that Valla used codex **Mu$_3$**[43]:
— at §3 the only manuscript to omit καὶ σπέρματα is **Mu$_3$**, and the same words are omitted by Valla;
— at §4 **Mu$_3$** reads φλοιοῖς, reflected in Valla's *corticibus* against φλοιῷ of the rest of the tradition, corresponding to Gaza's and Poliziano's *cortice*.

Occasional discrepancies between the **BLM$_4$Mu$_3$P** branch and Gaza's translation might be due to his own interventions. Poliziano and Valla, though probably having at hand Gaza's translation, in case of major discrepancies preferred to trust their Greek exemplars instead of Gaza, even when the latter's translation provided a better sense.

Gaza's Translation

We have mentioned above that students of Gaza's translations have noticed his rather free treatment of his models: this feature can also be observed in the *specimen* we have chosen to analyze.

The most significant omissions are §3 καθάπερ ἐν κιβωτῷ and the whole text of §14, which are unanimously transmitted by all Greek manuscripts I have been able

42 I quote from Oikonomopoulou's translation in M. Meeusen, K. Oikonomopoulou, L. Silvano, "The Prefaces to Pseudo-Alexander of Aphrodisias' *Medical Puzzles and Natural Problems*, Books 1 and 2: Relationship, and Background", forthcoming.

43 Cranz, "Alexander Aphrodisiensis", p. 131 has suggested that Valla might depend on manuscripts Modena, Biblioteca Estense, *Mut. gr. 109* Puntoni (α P 5.20) and *Mut. gr. 145* Puntoni (α V 7.17): the latter, however, contains Alexander's *Quaestiones naturales*, and not Pseudo-Alexander's *Problemata*.

to inspect so far[44]. Additions are indeed very frequent, in the form of explanatory glosses, as in the following cases: at §3, *naturae solertia*, while the subject is not repeated in the Greek text; at §5, the recipient dative *mortalibus*; at §7, *nisi ita operta conseptaque manerent* ("unless they would remain covered and enclosed"), a remark concerning the ratio of things "exceeding human mind" (*modumque penitus humani ingenii excedens*), the expansion listing attributes of God (*Deo… immortali, qui rerum omnium parens, atque auctor est*), and a comment on people that just "limit themselves to looking at a thing" that they do not know "and wonder at it" (*sed tantummodo rem inspectant, et demirantur*); at §9, the addition concerning the hen cleaning not only itself (as in the Greek text: ἑαυτήν), but also its own egg (*et ovum*) after having expulsed it; and §7 *hic porro criminis teterrimi reus est, gravissimisque poenis obnoxius* against Greek κολάσεως τυγχάνουσιν ἔνοχοι "they deserve punishment"; other supplements are at §10 *cum nulla ratio vel caloris vel alicuius rei eiusmodi intelligatur*, and at §12 *non nisi vicem complent proprietatum*. Sometimes Gaza opts for rephrasing: at §13, where the Greek text says that "one must propose for investigation problems that occupy a middle ground, i.e. that pose real challanges to our knowledge, but admitting a solution", Gaza provides a longer (and indeed sound) explanation of these problems as *non quae perspicua ex se sunt vel tam occulta ut percipi a nemine possint, sed quae quamvis difficilia et obscura explicari tamen lucemque recipere rationum et doctrina hominis atque ingenio possint*. Another example of free interpretation is *cum tam longe omnibus pateat* at §2 where the Greek says "every intelligent person would say". Sometimes Gaza resorts to magniloquent periphrases, such as at §2 *qui ingressu utuntur* for "pedestrian (animals)" and *incolae aquarum* for ἔννυδροι (whereas Valla has *aquatici*, and Poliziano *aquatiles*). Given its tendency to expand and integrate its model, Gaza's translation results in a much longer text than the Greek original. All in all, Gaza offers a rather free and personal version, which combines translation and interpretation, but is however generally true to the meaning of the original.

Valla's Translation

The same cannot be said of Valla's translation, that in at least one passage is completely wrong: at §10 he misunderstands the sentence καὶ ἄλλος πρὸς τήνδε πλέον ἥδεται τὴν τροφήν, ῥᾷον αὐτὴν μεταβάλλων. Οὐδεὶς δὲ καὶ τὴν θαλασσίαν νάρκην ἀγνοεῖ· πῶς διὰ τῆς μηρίνθου τὸ σῶμα ναρκοῖ, τρίγλη δὲ κρατουμένη ἀντιπαθεῖ τῇ νάρκῃ; ("and some other person is more pleased by this nourishment, as he converts it more easily. And there is nobody who does not know of the electric ray: how, then, does it numb the body from the fishing line, but when a red mullet is taken in hand, it counteracts the electric ray?"), which he translates *sunt etiam qui inter navigandum comedendi exacuant appetitum cibum facile transmutantes omnis a mari excitatae gravedinis ignari*: the error firstly originates from the adverb πλέον, erroneously interpreted as a form of the verb πλέω, 'to sail'; secondly, from interpreting Greek *narke* ('electric ray',

44 An anonymous reader has supplied the missing text in the margin of f. 61v of Ms. *Vat. lat. 2990* (= **Vb**).

'torpedo'), possibly due to the influence of Gaza's (correct) *torpedo*, as a synonym of 'numbness', 'heaviness' (*gravedo*).

Compared to Gaza's version, Valla's is much more adherent to the Greek. Valla faithfully renders the original down to the level of syntactic arrangement. See for instance at §2 πᾶς γὰρ συνετὸς εἴποι ἄν / *Quilibet enim sagax… asseret* (cf. Poliziano's *Quivis enim prudens dixerit*), whilst Gaza had opted for giving a different turn to the phrase (*cum tam late omnibus pateat*).

Valla tends not to omit any word (for example, he is the only one to translate the parenthetic remark οἶμαι at §1); thus, omissions of passages unanimously transmitted by all Greek manuscripts (as far as I have seen), like §2 ἢ ῥάμφη and §8 ὑπό τε τῶν τούτου ῥινημάτων ζῳοποιεῖται ἡ λίθος, might be accidental. Valla sometimes resorts to reduplications, as in the case of §2 πεζοί, i.e. 'terrestrian', 'pedestrian', which he translates *terrestribus, quae eunt pedibus* (Gaza, as mentioned above, has *qui ingressu utuntur*; Politian opts for *gressiles*, a term which is not classical, but commonly found in humanist Latin[45]); see also at §2 the expansion *crustaceam seu testaceam pellem habentia* for ὀστρακόδερμα; at §5 *nuncios ac praecones* for κήρυκας; at §8 *leniter lancinati atque attractati* for γαργαλιζόμενοι; at §9 *quae ova nobis domi parit* is not a precise translation of ᾠὸν τεκοῦσα "after dropping its egg". Furthermore, in correspondence of §15 *essentiatum*, Valla inserts a long gloss to justify the adoption of this term, which represents a rough translation of οὐσιῶδες: *hoc novatum verbum paulo durius, eo quod Graeci dicunt 'ousiodes' quod est 'per essentiae habitum', usus molliet*.

In the second edition of his translation, the one that went into the press in 1488, Valla slightly revised the text and equipped it with a useful running apparatus of citations from other related ancient sources (see illustration 2, and n. 87 below).

Poliziano's Translation

In evaluating Poliziano's translation, one must bear in mind that the text available to us does not reflect his authors' last will, for it was published posthumously and without his revision (see above).

On the one hand, Poliziano seems to have relied on Gaza, from whom he has borrowed equivalents for several scientific terms; on the other, he might possibly also have at hand Valla's version, as some textual similarities between the two texts may indicate (see below in the *specimen*, esp. at §§1, 9, 14 etc.). Compared to Gaza's, Poliziano's rendering is more precise: although not being a literal translation, his version regularly provides equivalents for the Greek particles (δέ = *autem*, γάρ = *nam*, *enim* etc.); furthermore, Poliziano avoids dittologies and does not exceed in superfluous words and circumlocutions.

His text corresponds more or less to the size of the original (roughly 800 words), thus being consistently shorter than Gaza's and Valla's translations, which are more or less a hundred word longer. Instead of Latinizing technical terms, he generally

45 J. Ramminger, "gressilis", in *Id., Neulateinische Wortliste. Ein Wörterbuch des Lateinischen von Petrarca bis 1700*, URL: www.neulatein.de/words/3/007699.htm (accessed June 2018).

attempts at providing correct Latin equivalents: for instance, while Gaza translitterates τρίγλη into *trigla*, Poliziano resorts to the proper Latin term *mullum* ('mullet'); in the same passage, he correctly translates μήρινθος (the 'fishing line') with *linea*[46], whilst Gaza had opted for a more generic *funiculum*. In most instances Poliziano's translation succeeds in being faithful and at the same time idiomatic and clear: see e.g. his rendering of §11 τὸ γὰρ ἴδιον ἑκάστου προφερόμενον ἄρρητον ὑπάρχει πρὸς ἀπόδοσιν τῆς αἰτίας ("for what is proclaimed to be the particular property of each is unsayable in respect of providing an account of the cause") as *quod enim de horum proprietate affertur, arcanum propemodum est ad causam afferendam*.

In short, Poliziano's careful treatment of the *textus receptus* is probably the distinguishing mark of his translation, which is primarily a philological exercise[47]. At the same time, however, he is concerned about fluency and clarity. His version can thus be defined a compromise between a literal and a literary rendition, well balanced between the two opposites of extreme adherence and free rendering.

Conclusions

A first result of this preliminary survey is the probable identification of Valla's Greek exemplar with the Modena manuscript **Mu$_3$**. Furthermore, the comparative analysis of this *specimen* of the three translations has shown striking similarities among them, regarding not only the choice of *termini technici*, but also the phrasing of several passages. This leads me to formulate the hypothesis that both Valla and Poliziano had Gaza's translation at hand, and at times relied on it.

These translations need, thus, to be studied as a whole, and not separately, as self-standing pieces of erudition.

46 Politian probably knew the term from Martial, 3.58.27, a verse possibly echoed in his *Rusticus*, 442: see the commentary *ad loc.* in Angelo Poliziano, *Silvae*, ed. F. Bausi, Firenze, Olschki, 1996.

47 Maïer, *Ange Politien*, p. 384: "en tant qu'exercise portant sur une matière nouvelle, cette traduction constitue la façon la plus directe d'assimiler des connaissances".

Appendix

Synoptic Edition of Gaza's, Valla's, and Poliziano's Translations of the Preface to Book I of Pseudo-Alexander's *Problemata*

Legenda *and* sigla

Column I contains the Greek text of my critical edition[48]. Variant readings from the manuscript family **$BLM_4Mu_3P_4$**, on which all three translations depend, are given between square brackets after the corresponding words in the critical text, which I have highlighted in italics.

Column II contains the text of Gaza's translation. The present edition is based on two among the oldest manuscripts (the dedication copy to Pope Nicholas V, *Vat. lat.* 2111, ff. 188r-190r = **V_a**; and *Vat. lat.* 2990, ff. 61r-64r = **V_b**) and on the Aldina of 1503-1504 (**V_e**), which is generally less reliable than the previously mentioned witnesses. Variant readings are given in the footnotes at the bottom of the page.

Column III contains the text of Valla's translation. The present edition has been prepared collating the only known manuscript copy (*Laur. Plut.* 84.16, ff. 2v-3v = **F**), attesting the first redaction of the text, dating from 1466, against the *editio princeps* (Venetiis 1488 = **V_{en}**, ff. a iiir-v), that contains Valla's second redaction. Variant readings are given in the footnotes at the bottom of the page.

Column IV contains the text of Poliziano's translation. The present edition has been prepared collating the two canonical editions of Poliziano's collected works, both posthumous, i.e. the *editio princeps* of Venice 1498 (= **Ald**) and the 1553 Basel edition (= **Bas**). Variant readings are given in the footnotes at the bottom of the page.

As to the presentation of the Latin texts, the following should be noted:
— words or passages that recur identical or similar in Gaza's translation and in Valla's and/or Poliziano's translations are highlighted in bold;
— words or passages that recur identical or similar in Valla's and Poliziano's translations are highlighted in italics;
— words or passages that recur identical or similar in all three translations are highlighted in bold italics.

48 In L. Silvano, "Studiare la natura", p. 97-100.

I. Pseudo-Alexander Aphrodisiensis, *Problemata*, libri primi *praefatio*	II. Translatio Theodori Gazae	III. Translatio Georgii Vallae	IV. Translatio Angeli Politiani
Tit. Ἀλεξάνδρου Ἀφροδισιέως ἰατρικῶν ἀπορημάτων καὶ φυσικῶν προβλημάτων.	*Tit.* Alexandri Aphrodisei liber problematum variorum primus ad Nicolaum Quintum[49].	*Tit.* Alexandri Aphrodisei Problemata per Georgium Vallam Placentinum in Latinum translata.	*Tit.* Solutionum liber ab Angelo Politiano in Latinum conversus.
[1] Τῶν προβλημάτων τὰ μὲν αὐτόθεν ἐστὶ πιστὰ καὶ γνώριμα, πάσης ἀμφιβολίας καὶ ζητήσεως ἄγευστα.	[1] Quaestionum naturalium ratio partim certa ex se cospectaque est, omni **ambiguitat**e, discussioneque abiuncta.	[1] *Problematum* quaedam per se sunt fidem facientia *et* cognita, *omnis* ***ambiguitat****is* ac *quaestionis expertia*.	[1] *Problematum* alia suapte natura credibilia sunt, *et* nota, *omnis*que ***ambiguitat***is et *quaestionis expertia*.
[2] Τίς γὰρ, οἶμαι, νοῦν ἔχων ἀπορήσειε, τίνος ἕνεκεν ἡ φύσις τοῖς πτηνοῖς ἐδωρήσατο πτερά (πᾶς γὰρ συνετὸς εἴποι ἄν, ὅτι θάλψεως χάριν ἀνθ' ἱματίων μὲν πρῶτον περιέβαλε, δεύτερον δὲ κάλλους ἕνεκεν), πεζοῖς δὲ ζῴοις τρίχας, ἑρπετοῖς δὲ φολίδας, ἐνύδροις δὲ λεπίδας, ἢ ὄστρακα, καθάπερ τὰ ὀστρακόδερμα προσαγορευόμενα; Καὶ πάλιν διὰ τί τοῖς μὲν κέρατα, τοῖς δὲ κέντρα, τοῖς δὲ ὀξεῖς ὄνυχας ἢ ῥάμφη ἤ τι τοιοῦτον;	[2] **Quis enim,** modo **mentis** sit **compos**, quaerat[50] quam ob causam **natura pennas volucr**um generi **largita** est, cum tam late[51] omnibus pateat pennas primum **fovendi gratia**, perinde atque amiculum genus **animant**ium illud induisse, **deinde** ornatus etiam causa eum in modum extitisse[52] eadem scilicet[53] illa ratione qua pilis naturae ingenio teguntur qui ingressu utuntur[54] animantes, qua **cortice serpentes**,	[2] Nemo ***enim***, ut arbitror, sanae mentis *dubit*averit cur **volucr**ibus plumas ***natura largita*** sit. *Qui*libet *enim* sagax **fovendi** causa pro *vestimentis prim*um *circum*fudisse asseret, **deinde** decoris gratia; terrestribus autem animalibus et quae eunt pedibus pilos[55], **serpent***ibus* squamas, aquaticis cortices, *aut* crustas cuiusmodi sunt quae ostrocoderma idest crustaceam seu *testace*am pellem habentia *nuncupantur*?	[2] **Quis *enim*,** quaeso, **mentis compos** *dubit*et cur volatilibus **pennas** ***natura*** sit e***largita***? *Qui*vis *enim* prudens dixerit fomenti **gratia**, quasi *vestimentis prim*o *circum*data, tum ob speciem, quemadmodum gressilibus quoque **animant**ibus dati sunt villi, **serpent***ibus* **cortices**, squammae aquatilibus *aut* testae, velut iis, quae *testacea nuncupantur*? Cur praeterea ***aliis*** *quidem* ***cornua***, ***aliis*** *autem*

49 *Tit. om.* $\mathbf{V_e}$.
50 quaerat: hesitet, quaerat $\mathbf{V_aV_b}$.
51 longe $\mathbf{V_e}$.
52 extitisse intectum $\mathbf{V_aV_b}$.
53 scilicet eadem $\mathbf{V_e}$.
54 intuntur $\mathbf{V_b}$.
55 quae cum pedibus eunt pilos **F**. One would expect *iis quae eunt*; otherwise *et* is pleonastic.

Πρὸς ἄμυναν τῶν ἀδικούντων *ὥσπερ* [ὥσπερ τισί] φυσικοῖς δόρασιν ἠσφαλίσατο ταῦτα.	qua squamis, aut testis bestiae incolae aquarum? Cur item natura **aliis**[56] animantibus **cornua** dederit, **aliis aculeos**, **aliis ungues acutos, aut rostra**, aut quid tale, quis quaerere debeat? Constat **enim** naturam his[57] ipsis **veluti quibusdam hasti**s nativis bestias suas munivisse, **quo se** defendere ab iis possent[58] quae detrimentum inveherent.	Et rursus quamobrem ***aliis*** *quidem* ***cornua***, ***aliis*** *autem* ***aculeos***, ***aliis*** vero ***ungues*** et eos aut acutos aut aduncos, seu id genus aliud **quo se** ab infestantibus reddant tutiora, utpote naturalibus ***quibusdam*** telis adiuta?	***aculeos***, ***aliis*** **acutos** ***ungueis*****, aut rostra**, aut eiuscemodi quippiam tribuerit? Haec **enim** omnia **velut** agnatis ***quibusdam*** **hasti**libus **quo se**se ipsa ab iniuria tuerentur armavit.
[3] Καρποὺς δὲ πάντας *καὶ σπέρματα* [om. $\mathbf{M_{u3}}$] πρὸς γένεσιν καὶ διαδοχὴν τοῦ γένους τεκτηναμένη ἡ φύσις, λέπεσιν ἢ σώμασί τισιν ὑγροῖς ἢ ξυλώδεσιν ἢ δέρμασιν *ὁμοίως* [ὁμοίοις] ἠσφαλίσατο, καθάπερ ἐν *κιβωτῷ* [κιβωτίῳ] τούτους ἀποκρύψασα πρὸς ἀποφυγὴν κρύους ἢ θάλπους ἢ ζῴων τινῶν ἀδικούντων.	[3] Constat item **fruct**um ac seminum genera, quae ad ortum vicemque succedendi perpetuam **natura** molita est, tunicis aut **corp**usculis aliquibus **humidis** aridisve[59] aut coriis[60] vestiri, ut secura tum a frigore, tum ab aestu, tum etiam ab animantium **iniuria** praeserventur[61].	[3] Fruges autem *omnes* ad **ortum** ac *gen*eris propagationem **natura** producens *corticibus aut* ***corp****oribus quibusdam* **humidis**, *aut lignos*is, aut huiusmodi tunicis custodivit, eas tanquam in arcula aliqua[62] contegens, ad algoris *aut* **aest**us *aut* noxiarum *quorundam*[63] *animantium* effugium.	[3] Cumque *omnes* natura **fruct**us omniaque semina tum ad generandum tum ad *gen*us excipiendum fabricata foret, *corticibus* ea *aut* ***corp****oribus quibusdam* mollibus *aut lign*um aut cutem imitantibus communivit, et quasi intra scriniolum occuluit, ut rigoris *aut* caloris, *aut animantium quorundam* **iniuria**m devitarent.
Καὶ αὐτὸ δὲ τὸ περίβλημα παντελῶς ἀχρεῖον οὐ κατέλειψεν, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τροφὴν [*add.* ἐπιτήδειον] παρεσκεύασεν.	**In** multis certe **ne ipsum quidem** tegumentum penitus esse **inutile** naturae solertia passa est: sed **cib**o **idoneum** suis provida animantibus astruxit.	Nimirum in multis ***ipsum*** omnino ***inutile*** *non reliquit* indumentum, sed ad nutrimentum ac ***cib***um com*paravit* oportunum.	**In** plerisque autem ***ne ipsum*** **quidem** involucrum *reliquit* ***inutile***, sed **idoneum** ***cib***atui *paravit*.

56 aliis e suis $\mathbf{V_aV_b}$.
57 iis $\mathbf{V_a}$.
58 possint $\mathbf{V_e}$.
59 aridisve *om.* $\mathbf{V_e}$ (ξυλώδεσιν, id est lignosis *mg. add.* $\mathbf{V_aV_b}$).
60 corio $\mathbf{V_e}$ (pellibus *voci* coriis *superscr.* $\mathbf{V_b}$).
61 perserventur $\mathbf{V_b}$.
62 quadam **F**.
63 *scripsi* : quarundam **F** $\mathbf{V_{en}}$.

[4] Αὐτὰ δὲ τὰ φυτὰ φύλλοις μὲν καὶ φλοιῷ [φλοιοῖς **Mu$_3$**] καὶ τοῖς ὁμοίοις ἠμφίασεν ἀντὶ πτερῶν ἢ τριχῶν. προῄδει γὰρ ὡς ἄμετρος ψύξις ἢ θερμότης ἐδύνατο λυμαίνεσθαι ταῦτα. *ἀκάνθαις* δὲ [τινὰ δὲ καὶ] καθώπλισεν ἀντὶ βελῶν διὰ τὴν ἀπὸ τῶν ζῴων φθοράν.

[4] **Stirpes** iam[64] **ipsas frondibus**[65], libro, **cortice**, reliquis vitae id genus **vice**[66] **pennarum** pilorum**ve** obduxit, quippe quae fere norit ut vel a nimio **frigore**, vel ab **aestu** immodico **offendi** interireque **posse**nt, nisi ita operta conseptaque manerent; **nonnull**a etiam **spinis** tanquam **spiculis**[67] contra **animantium** morsus **armavit**,

[4] ***Ipsas*** autem **stirpes** foliis et **cortici**bus ac *similibus* ***pennarum*** aut *villorum* loco circumdedit: *praevid*it enim ne *immod*eratus algor aut **aestu**s has possit conficere. **nonnull**as porro pro iaculis ***spinis armavit*** ne a bestiis absumerentur atque afflictarentur,

[4] Plantas vero ***ipsas*** **frondibus**, **cortice**, caeterisque *similibus* ***pinnarum*** *villorum*que **vic**em convestivit, ut quas *praevid*erat *immod*ico **frigore** aut **aestu offendi posse** et labefactari: quin et earum quasdam etiam ***spinis*** quasi **spiculis** ***armavit*** quibus **animantium** iniuria propulsarent;

[5] Ἄνθεσι δὲ ποικίλοις ἐστεφάνωσε ταῦτα κόσμου καὶ κάλλους ἕνεκεν, καὶ πάλιν ὥσπερ κήρυκας προμηνύοντας τὴν τῶν καρπῶν προκύπτουσαν γένεσιν.

[5] **flor**es praeterea **vari**os praestitit ut exornaret formosumque genus stirpium liberalissime redderet, utque **nuncios** quasi statueret qui mortalibus **fructuum** infantiam mox **prae**dicerent emersuram.

[5] eas quoque **vari**is **flori**bus *ornat*us et decoris causa *coronavit*, quos tamquam **nuncios** ac *praecon*es ad erupturum mox **fructuum** ortum **prae**misit.

[5] **flor**umque **varie**tate partim ad speciem atque *ornat*um *coronavit*, partim uti vice *praecon*um instantem **fructuum** paritudinem **prae**monstrarent.

[6] Ὅσοι μὲν τοιαῦτα γνωστὰ καὶ σαφῆ προτείνουσιν, ἄντικρυς δέονται νοῦ· ὅσοι δὲ διχοστατοῦσιν, εἰ συμφύτως τῷ πυρὶ σύνεστιν ἡ θερμότης, ἁπτικῆς αἰσθήσεώς εἰσιν ἐνδεεῖς. ὅσοι δέ, πότερον φύσις καὶ λόγος προνοητικὸς προμηθεύεται τὰ ἐν γενέσει καὶ φθορᾷ, τὴν τάξιν, τὴν κίνησιν, τὴν θέσιν, τὴν διάπλασιν, τὰς χρόας, τὰ παραπλήσια [ἀπειθοῦσι *add.*], κολάσεως τυγχάνουσιν ἔνοχοι.

[6] **Haec** tam **dilucida** tam certa qui discutienda in medium affert **mente procul dubio** vacat; at qui **ambig**at an **calor**[68] **igni insitus sit**, hic **tangendi sensu** orbatus degit; qui quaerat[69] **utrum natura** et **ratio provida rebus orien**dis **occid**endisque consulat decernatque[70] **ordinem, motum, positum**, speciem, **color**em, **cete**ra generis eiusdem, hic porro criminis teterrimi reus est, gravissimisque **poenis obnoxi**us.

[6] *Qui*cumque *igitur* huiusmodi cognita et aperta student exolvere a***ment***es propemodum *sunt*; *qui* ***ambigunt*** nunquid ***igni sit insit****a cal*iditas a ***tangendi sens*****u** sunt immunes; *qui* porro in *ort*u et interitu seriem, ***motum, positum,*** confirmationem, ***color***es, proprietates, ut natura ac ratio providenter observat *non* admittunt, **punitioni obnoxi**i *sunt*.

[6] *Igitur qui* nota **haec** ac **dilucida**que sibi postulant explicari *sunt* **procul dubio** ***mente*** capti: *qui* autem ***ambigunt*** an sit ***igni insitus calor***, ii ***tangendi*** non habent ***sens*****um**; *qui* dubitant **utrum natura** ac **provida ratio** consulat iis **rebus** quae ***oriun***tur et **occid**unt, quique **ordinem, *motum positum***, ductum, ***color***es **cete**raque his similia *non* credunt, supplicio digni *sunt*.

64 in **V$_e$**.
65 foliis *superscr.* **V$_b$**.
66 pennarum pilorumve vice **V$_e$**.
67 iaculis telis *superscr.* **V$_b$**.
68 *color* **V$_e$**.
69 quaerit **V$_e$**.
70 consultet decertatque **V$_e$** (provideat *voci* consulat *superscr.* **V$_b$**).

[7] [Ταῦτα τοίνυν αὐτόθεν ἐστὶ γνώριμα *add.*] τὰ δὲ ἄλυτα παντελῶς ἐστι θεῷ μόνῳ γνώριμα, τῷ καὶ τὴν τούτων οὐσίαν ὑποστήσαντι.	[7] Quaestionum igitur ratio, quod proposui, partim e se certa manifestaque est, partim **inexplicabil**is, modumque penitus humani ingenii excedens, **Deo** dumtaxat **cognita**	[7] *Haec* nimirum per sese *sunt* cognita. At quaedam prorsus sunt insolubilia et *soli* ***Deo cognita*** qui eorum constituit *essentia*m.	[7] *Haec* itaque suapte natura nota *sunt*. Alia rursus **inexplicabil**ia penitus *soli* ***cognita Deo***, scilicet illorum *essentia*e autori.
Καὶ γὰρ ὁ τεχνίτης ἔργον τι μηχανικὸν κατασκευάσας οἶδεν αὐτοῦ πάσας τῶν ἐνεργειῶν τὰς αἰτίας, ἰδιώτης δὲ παντελῶς ἄμοιρος τῶν αἰτιῶν ἐστιν.	immortali, qui rerum omnium parens atque auctor est. **Op**eris quippe cuiusdam **solert**issimi[71] rationem **artifex** qui extruxit, integre **tenet**; caeteri **vero qui**[72] artis sunt[73] illius ignari, rationem nullam reddere queunt, sed tantummodo rem inspectant, et demirantur.	Opifex enim si quando *aliquod* excogitando ***op****us* confecit, *omnes* eius *act*ionum *causas* plane percalluit, ***ver***um rudis *caus*arum omnino est expers.	Nam et **artifex** qui sit ***op****us aliquod* **solert**ius machinatus *omneis* illius *actu*um **tenet** *causas*; **qui *vero*** eius **operis** sit imperitus c*aus*as quoque ipsas penitus ignorat.
[8] Ἄποροι δὲ ζητήσεις εἰσὶν αἱ τοιαίδε· τίνος ἕνεκεν οἱ γαργαλιζόμενοι μασχάλας ἢ πέλματα ἢ πλευρὰς γελῶσιν; Ἢ τίνος χάριν ἀκούοντές τινες μαρμάρων παρατριβομένων ἢ πριζομένων ἢ τρίζοντος ἢ ῥινουμένου σιδήρου τοὺς ὀδόντας εὐθέως ναρκῶσιν;	[8] **Quaestiones** quas **inexplicabiles** dixi **huiuscemodi sunt**: quam ob causam **ride**re ii[74] soleant, quos in **alis** aut[75] costis **aut plantis titill**amus? **Cur nonnullli** cum mutuum **marmor**um **attr**itum **sectio**nemve aut **ferr**i **stridor**em **lima**tumve[76] sentiunt **dentibus obst**upescant[77]?	[8] Dubiae itaque ***quaestiones sunt huiusmodi***: quamobrem leniter lancinati atque attractati sub **alis *aut plant*is** aut *later*ibus ***rid****ent*? Sive qua de causa audientes aliquos ***marmor****a* ***atter***entes **aut secant**es aut ***stride***ntes aut ***ferr***um ***lima***ntes ***dent*ibus** e vestigio inhorrescunt?	[8] **Inexplicabiles** autem ***quaestiones huiuscemodi sunt***: cur quibus alae, ***aut plant***ae, aut *later*a **titill**antur, ***ride****nt*? **Cur**ve **nonnull**is, cum ***marmor****a* ***atter***untur **aut secant**ur, cum ***stride***t ***ferr***um aut ***lima***tur, ipso confestim auditu ***dent***es **obto**rpescunt[78]?

71 quidem solertissimi cuiusdam $\mathbf{V_e}$.
72 caeteri vero *om.* $\mathbf{V_e}$.
73 sint $\mathbf{V_e}$.
74 hi $\mathbf{V_b V_e}$.
75 et $\mathbf{V_e}$.
76 limarumque $\mathbf{V_b V_e}$.
77 ostupescunt $\mathbf{V_e}$ obtorpescant $\mathbf{V_b}$.
78 obstorpescunt **Ald Bas**.

Ἢ διὰ τί τὴν ἀπὸ τῶν ψυχρῶν ὀπωρῶν προσγινομένην αἱμωδίαν τοῖς ὀδοῦσιν ἀνδράχνη ψυχρὰ πεφυκυῖα θεραπεύει καὶ οὐκέτι τὰ ἐναντία τῶν ἐναντίων ἰάματα, ἀλλὰ τὰ ὅμοια; ἢ διὰ τί λίθος ἡ μαγνῆτις ἕλκει μόνον τὸν σίδηρον, ὑπό τε τῶν τούτου ῥινημάτων ζῳοποιεῖται, ἡ λίθος [om.] ἥ τε ἤλεκτρος λεγομένη μόνα τὰ κυρήβια καὶ τὰ κάρφη συναναspᾶ κολλωμένη τούτοις;

Qui[79] fieri potest ut **stupor**i[80] **dentibus** a **frigidis** fructibus iniecto **portulaca** herba, **quae frigida est**, medeatur, cum non res **simil**es sed **contrari**ae remedio **contrari**is esse debeant? Qua de causa **lapis** *qui* **magnet**es[81] *vocatus est* **ferrum** solus[82] **attrah**ere ramentisque ferri[83] iuvari valeat, **electrum** sive **succinum** floccos **festic**ulasque sibi ita coiungit ut haerentes possit attrahere?

Seu qua de causa e ***frigidis*** frugibus ***dent*ibus *stupor***e effectis ***frigida portulaca*** commode **medeatur**, nec sunt ***contrar****ia* ***contrar***iis *medicam*ina, verum ***simil****ia*? Vel *cur* ***lapis magnet****is* **solum** ***attrah****it* ***ferrum***, **electrum** quoque paleas et stramenta solum dicitur insigniter trahere,

Cur ***dent***ium ***stupor***em, qui e ***frigidis*** pomis proveniat, ***portulaca*** tamen, **quae** et ipsa ***frigida* est**, sanat — *neque sunt* ***contrar***iorum ***contrar****ia medicam*enta, sed ***simil****ia*? Aut *cur* ***magnet****is* ***lapis ferrum*** tantum ***attrah****it*, deque eius scobe vivificatur, **succinum** vero tantum folia arida, ac **festuc**as aggregat, eisque agglutinatur,

[9] Καὶ λέων ἀλεκτρυόνα δέδοικε μόνον, ὄρνις δὲ κατοικίδιος ᾠὸν τεκοῦσα τοῖς κάρφεσιν ἑαυτὴν ἀποκαθαίρει πανταχόσε τοῦ σώματος· ὄρτυγές τε σιτοῦνται τὸν ἑλλέβορον τοῖς ἀνθρώποις δηλητήριον ὄντα· ψᾶρες δὲ τὸ κώνειον·

[9] Unde fit ut **leo gallum** tantummodo extimescat? Quid est quod **gallina edito ovo festuc**a aliqua **se** et ovum lustrat? Quare **veratro coturnices, cicuta sturni vescuntur**, quae **toxic**a **hominibus** esse certum est?

[9] *et* ***leo gall*um** dumtaxat metuit, ***gallina*** quoque quae ova nobis domi parit **se** stramentis toto *corp*ore perpurgat; ***coturnices*** helleborum comedunt ***homin*ibus** letalem, ***sturni*** autem ***cicut***am[87],

[9] *et* ***leo*** solum ***gall***inaceum pavet; villaris autem ***gallina* edito ovo festuc**is undequaque *corp*us purificat; ***coturnices* veratro, quod toxic**um ***homini*, vescuntur, *sturni cicut***a;

ἀσκαμωνία δὲ μᾶλλον χολὴν ξανθὴν ἕλκει· κολοκυνθὶς δὲ καὶ ἀγαρικὸν καὶ λευκὸς ἐλλέβορος εὐφόρβιόν τε καὶ κόκκος Κνίδιος φλέγμα· μέλας δὲ ἐλλέβορος καὶ ἐπίθυμον μέλαιναν χολήν;

Quam ob rem **ascamonia**[84] **bilem** ducat, cucurbita agrestis, **agaricum**, **veratrum**[85] candidum, **euphorbium**, granum **Cnid**ium **pituitam, veratrum autem** atrum ac **epithimum atram bilem**[86]?

scamone*a** *flavam*[88] attrahit* bilem**, *colocynta et* ***agaricum*** et *alb*us *ellebor*us ***euphorbium***que ac *coccus* ***Cnidi****us* ***pituitam***, *nig*er *autem* elleborus *et* ***epithimum atram bilem***?

as*camoni*a *flavam* **bilem** *trahit*, *colocyntha* vero *et* ***agaricum*** et *alb*um **veratrum *epholbion***que et *coccus* ***Cnidi****us* ***pituitam***, *nigr*um ***autem* veratrum** *et* ***epithymium*** nigram ***bilem***;

---

79 quid **V$_e$**.
80 aliter stupori **V$_a$**, **V$_b$** *mg.*
81 magnetis **V$_e$**.
82 solum **V$_e$**.
83 *mg.* ζωπιεῖσθαι (*Scil.* ζῳοποιεῖται) **V$_a$V$_b$**.
84 scamonea **V$_e$**.
85 eleborus *superscr.* **V$_b$**.
86 bilem atram **V$_e$**.
87 *Add.* **Ven** *mg.*: Ambrosius [*Hexameron* 3, 9, 39]: Denique sturni vescuntur conio [conium *Ambr.*] nec fraudi est eis, quoniam qualitate [per qualitatem *Ambr.*] sui corporis venenum succi lethalis evadunt. Frigida enim vis eius est succi quam subtilibus poris in cordis sui sedem ducentibus precoci digestione praeveniunt, priusquam vitalia ipsa praetemptet [pertenet *Ambr.*]. Idem alibi [*Hexameron, ibid.*]: Helleborum autem periti loquuntur escam esse et alimoniam coturnicum, eoque naturali quodam temperamento sui corporis vim pabuli nocentis evitent.
88 flava **F**.

Τινὲς δὲ ὑπὸ μὲν τῶν καθαιρόντων στεγνοῦνται τὴν κοιλίαν, ὑπὸ δὲ τῶν στελλόντων καθαίρονται μᾶλλον.	Cur **alvu**s nonnullorum rebus astringitur quae alvum resolvere consueverunt, contraque iis[89] resolvitur potius, quae astringere possunt?	Sunt qui purgamentis **alvu**m cohibent, a cohibentibus vero eam potius ciunt et *pur*gant.	quibusdam vero sedatur venter iis quae perpurgant, contra vero iis quae sedant per*pur*gatur;
[10] Καὶ ἄλλος πρὸς τήνδε πλέον ἥδεται τὴν τροφήν, ῥᾷον αὐτὴν μεταβάλλων.	[10] Quam ob rem **alius alio cibo delectetur,** eundem**que** alius **facilius**, alius difficilius **concoq**uere valeat, cum nulla ratio, vel caloris vel alicuius rei eiusmodi intelligatur?	[10] Sunt etiam qui inter navigandum comedendi exacuant appetitum cibum ***facil***e transmutantes	[10] **tum alio alius cib**atu **magis delectatur**, eum**que** ***facil*ius concoquit**?
Οὐδεὶς δὲ καὶ τὴν θαλασσίαν νάρκην ἀγνοεῖ· πῶς διὰ τῆς μηρίνθου τὸ σῶμα ναρκοῖ, τρίγλη δὲ κρατουμένη ἀντιπαθεῖ τῇ νάρκῃ;	Nemo sane vel **torpedinem** piscem **torporem per** funiculum[90] nostro invehere **corp**ori, vel triglam obtentam vitium a **torpedin**e[91] accitum tollere **ignorat**.	omnis a mari[92] excitatae gravedinis ignari.	Quis autem **ignorat** marinam **torpedinem** vel **per** ipsam lineam **torporem** in **corp**us adigere, mullum[93] autem si manu contineatur contra **torpedin**em valere?
[11] Καὶ μυρίων ἄν σοι τοιούτων προκαταβαλοίμην κατάλογον, πείρᾳ μόνον γινωσκομένων, ἃ παρὰ τοῖς ἰατροῖς ἰδιότητες *ἄρρητοι* [ἀπόρρητοι] λέγονται· τὸ γὰρ [ἀποδιδόμενον *add.*] ἴδιον ἑκάστου προφερόμενον ἄρρητον ὑπάρχει [μικροῦ *add.*] πρὸς ἀπόδοσιν τῆς αἰτίας.	[11] Permulta id genus licet **enumerare quae nosci experi**mento tantum[94] potuerunt. Unde apud **medic**os abditae illae, delitescentesque causae, vice rationis[95] iis[96] in rebus habentur, quarum nulla ratio **reddi po**test[97].	[11] *Infinita possim* tibi recensere **quae** *sola* ***experi****entia cogn*ita sunt, quippe quae *a* ***medic****is* occultae *proprietates appellantur*: *quod* autem suum uniuscuiusque occultum est, id parum habet cuius **reddi** causa **po**ssit.	[11] *Infinita* denique **huiuscemodi enumerare** *possim* **quae** sola ***experi****entia cogn*oscuntur; quapropter et *a* ***medic****is proprietates* arcanae *appellantur*: *quod* enim de horum proprietate affertur, arcanum propemodum est ad causam afferendam.

89 his $\mathbf{V_bV_e}$.
90 laqueum *superscr.* $\mathbf{V_b}$.
91 Torpidine $\mathbf{V_e}$.
92 amari **F**.
93 mulum **Ald Bas**.
94 tantum experimentum $\mathbf{V_e}$.
95 vice rarationis $\mathbf{V_aV_b}$ *om.* $\mathbf{V_e}$.
96 his $\mathbf{V_e}$: iis $\mathbf{V_a}$: his $\mathbf{V_b}$.
97 poterit $\mathbf{V_a}$ $\mathbf{V_e}$.

Κακῶς γὰρ ἔνιοι λύσεις ἀθρόας τούτων παραβάλλουσι, *ἀπειροτάτας δὲ* [ἀσυμφόρους πάνυ] καὶ ἀπιθάνους.	Quocirca temere sane agunt qui genus id quaestionum **solution**ibus mandare contendunt, ne dici **improbabil**ius quicquam potest quam rationes quas illi adducunt,	Male *enim quidam horum* ***solution****es* subitanias efficiunt valde *inutiles*, nec fidem facientes.	Prave *enim quidam* ***solution****es horum* proponunt quam plurimas, quae *inutiles* penitus **improbabil**esque sunt.
[12] Φασὶ γὰρ τὰ καθαρτήρια θερμότητι τοὺς χυμοὺς ἕλκειν, ὅπερ ψεῦδος· ἔδει γὰρ πᾶν θερμὸν εἶναι καὶ καθαρτήριον·	[12] quippe medicamenta, quibus **purga**ndi vis data est: idcirco materias ducere posse inquiunt quoniam habitu sunt **calid**iori: **quod** error **est**. Nam si iure calori causa daretur, calida omnia vim illam purificam sortiri utique **oporteret**.	[12] Aiunt *enim* ***purga***mina **calid**itate *humores* at*trahere*, ***quod*** plane *falsum* ***est***: nam omne *calidum purgatorium esse* oportuit;	[12] Dicunt *enim* ***purga***toria, quae **calid**issima sunt, *humores trahere*, ***quod*** procul dubio *falsum* ***est***: **oporteret** enim quodcumque esset *calidum* idem et *purgatorium esse*.
Οὕτω γὰρ τὸ πέπερι θερμὸν ὂν οὐχ ἑλκτικόν ἐστιν, ἀλλὰ πεπτικὸν καὶ τονωτικόν, ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ μαστίχη καὶ ἀλόη.	**Nunc** vero **piper**, **quod** longe **calid**ius est[98], **vim non trahendi sed concoquendi** cor**roborandiq**ue possidet; cuius etiam generis **mastich**am et **alo**an[99] esse nulli dubium est;	atqui ecce tibi **piper quod** *cum sit* ***calid****um* ***non*** tamen **vim** at**trahendi** habet, ***sed concoque*****ndi roborandi**; itidem *et* ***mastich****e et* ***aloe***;	**Nunc** autem **piper**, *cum sit* ***calid****um*, ***non*** **trah**it, ***sed concoqu***it[100], solidatque; eodem[101] modo *et* ***mastich****e et* ***aloe***.
Φαμὲν δὲ μὴ ἀντιστρέφειν τὸν λόγον· πᾶν γὰρ καθαρτήριον θερμὸν μὲν τῇ κράσει, κενωτικὸν δὲ τῇ δυνάμει. οὐ πᾶν δὲ θερμὸν ἤδη καὶ τὴν δύναμιν καθαρτικόν.	itaque **reciprocari** ista nequaquam censendum. **Nam** et**si** omne quod ducere potest **calidum** est, aut tamen vicissim ita consequitur, ut quod **calidum** est, idem etiam **duc**ere possit.	*nec* e diverso rationem e converti *dicimus*: omne enim purgatorium temperamento ***calidum*** esse *vi autem* educere egerereque fatemur, nec omne ***calidum*** statim etiam vi ulla purgatorium est.	*Dicimus* itaque non **reciprocari** sermonem: **nam si** quocunque alvus ducatur id habitum quidem ***calidum*** *vi*m *autem* vacuefaciendi habet, non continuo tamen quicquid est ***calidum*** vim quoque habet **duc**endae alvi.

98 est *om.* **V$_e$**.
99 masticam, et aloen **V$_e$**.
100 concoquitque **Ald.**
101 Eodemque **Ald.**

Λέγουσι δὲ τὸν στρουθοκάμηλον σίδηρον πέττειν, οὐκ ἰδιότητί τινι, μᾶλλον δὲ θερμότητι· ὅπερ ἄτοπον. λέων γὰρ τούτου τοῦ ζῴου θερμότερος ὤν οὐ πέττει τὸν σίδηρον. οὐ μόνον δὲ παρὰ τοῖς ἰατροῖς ἐστιν ἰδιώματα μόνοις, ἀλλ' ἤδη καὶ παρὰ φιλοσόφοις καὶ γραμματικοῖς, πάθη λεγόμενα καὶ σεσημειωμένα ταῖς χρήσεσι.

Volunt idem **struthocamelum**[102] vi sui **calor**is **ferrum concoquere**, **quod absurdum** penitus est[103]; **leo** enim **qui** longe quam struthocamelus **calidior est ferrum concoqu**ere **non** potest. **Nec vero** medicinae artis autores **tantum** rerum statuere **proprietates** coguntur, **sed philosoph**i etiam et **grammatic**i eodem persaepe veniunt, etenim quae **pathe**, id **est affectus, appellant**, **usu**que comprobata observant, non nisi vicem complent proprietatum.

Aiunt praeterea ***struthocamelum ferrum*** *non proprietate* ulla, *sed* potius ***cal***ore ***concoquere***: ***quod*** *profecto* insulsum est; *leo nanque* cum *hoc* ipso *anima*li sit fervidior, ***non*** *tamen* ***ferrum concoq****uit*. Ne *apud medicos* quidem ***proprietates*** sunt solos, verum etiam et *apud* ***philosoph****os* et ***grammatic****os quae* passiones sive ***pathe appellant****ur* ex ***us*****u** *annotat*ae.

Dicimus itaque non **reciprocari** sermonem: **nam si** quocunque alvus ducatur id habitum quidem ***calidum*** *v*im *autem* vacuefaciendi habet, non continuo tamen quicquid est ***calidum*** vim quoque habet **duc**endae alvi. Dicunt autem et ***struthocamelum ferrum concoquere***, *non proprietate* quidem aliqua, *sed* ***calid***itate ***quod*** *profecto* **absurdum**; *leo namque*, **qui** *hoc anima*nti **calidior** est, ***ferrum*** *tamen* ***non concoq****uit*. **Neque vero** *apud medicos* **tantum** ***proprietates*** quedam sunt, **sed** *apud* ***philosoph****os* item ac ***grammatic****os*: ut ea *quae* ***pathe***, hoc **est affectus**, ***appellant****ur*, ***usi****bus adnotat*a.

[13] Χρὴ τοίνυν προβάλλειν εἰς ζήτησιν τὰ μέσην ἔχοντα χώραν, *ἀμφίβολά τε* [καὶ μὴ ἀμφίβολα] πρὸς γνῶσιν, *οἷά τε* [ἀλλ' ὅσα οἷά τέ ἐστι] πρὸς λύσιν ὑποπεσεῖν·

[13] Quaerenda igitur illa sunt, **quae locum obtinent medium**, hoc est non quae perspicua ex se sunt, vel tam occulta ut percipi a nemine possint, sed quae quamvis difficilia et obscura, explicari tamen lucemque recipere rationum, et doctrina hominis atque ingenio possint.

[13] Oportet igitur ea ad quaestionem proponere ***quae medium*** teneant ***locum***, et ad *cogn*itionem habendam eorum minime ambigua sint, sed qualiacumque sint[104] ut solutioni subiiciantur.

[13] Quocirca de iis dumtaxat quaerendum, ***quae medium*** quendam ***locum*** **obtinent** neque ad *cogn*oscendum ancipitia sunt, et sub explicationem cadere possunt.

---

102 struthicamelum $\mathbf{V_a}$ $\mathbf{V_b}$ *(sic et infra)*.
103 est *om.* $\mathbf{V_e}$.
104 sed qualiacumque sint *om.* **F**.

[14] Ὥσπερ γὰρ τῶν [τῶν γὰρ] λεγομένων τὰ μέν *ἐστι ψευδῆ πᾶσι γνωριζόμενα* [ψευδῆ πᾶσίν ἐστι γνώριμα], *τὰ δὲ πάντῃ* [τῶν δὲ] τὴν ἀλήθειαν *πρὸς ἀπόδειξιν κεκτημένα, τὰ δὲ ὡς ἂν εἴποι τις ἐξ ἀμφοτέρων κεκραμένα λεγόμενα, τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον καὶ τῶν* [om.] προβαλλομένων τὰ μέν ἐστιν εὔδηλα πᾶσι [καὶ] γινωσκόμενα, τὰ δὲ *πάντῃ* [πᾶσι] κεκρυμμένα λύσιν οὐχ ὑποδεχόμενα, τὰ δὲ μέσην ἔχοντα φύσιν, ὧν καὶ τὴν ἔκθεσιν ποιησόμεθα.

[14] *Sane* omnium *quae dicuntur* quaedam falsa esse *omnibus sunt* cognita; quaedam *prae se ferunt veritatem* et eorum *alia* quidem certa omnibus ac cognita; nonnulla omnibus sunt occulta, solutionem a nobis non admittentia; alia *vero med*iam quan*dam natur*am gerunt: de *qu*ibus *nunc* loqui nobis in animo est.

[14] *Quae* enim falsa *dicuntur*, ea *sunt omnibus* nota; quae *veritatem prae se ferunt*, horum nota sunt *alia* et conspicua, alia obscura et inexplicabilia; partim *vero med*iae cuius*dam* sunt *natur*ae, *qu*orum *nunc* expositionem aggredimur.

[15] Λυτέον δὲ πᾶν πρόβλημα ἀπὸ κράσεως, ἢ διαπλάσεως, ἢ ἐνεργείας, ἢ συμπαθείας τοῦ ὁμοίου, ἢ χρώματος, ἢ κατὰ ἀπάτην αἰσθήσεως, ἢ κατὰ ὁμωνυμίαν, ἢ ἐκ τοῦ μᾶλλον καὶ ἧττον τῶν ἐνεργουσῶν δυνάμεων αὐτοῦ, ἢ καθὸ σκληρότερον ἢ μανώτερον ἢ μεῖζον ἢ ἔλαττον *αὐτό φαμεν* [φημὶ], ἢ ἀπὸ χρόνου καὶ ἡλικίας καὶ ἔθους, ἢ *οὐσιώδους* [κατὰ τὸ οὐσιῶδες] ἢ κατὰ συμβεβηκός, ἢ [ἀπὸ *add.*] τῶν ὁμοίων καθὼς ἐν τοῖς προβλήμασιν εὑρήσεις τὰ λεγόμενα.

[15] Solutionem autem quaestionis cuiusque petendum ex rei, vel **habitu**, vel specie[105], vel actione, vel **e**x rei **simil**is[106] **consensu**, vel **ex colore**, vel ex **deceptione sensus**, vel ex aequivocatione[107], vel ex **vir**ibus quae **magis minusve** efficere possint, vel ex eo quod[108] res **duri**or, aut solutior, aut **mai**or, aut[109] **min**or, vel ex **tempore**, aut **aetate**, aut more[110], vel ex parte[111] **essenti**ali, aut eventitia, vel ex **rerum similium conditione**;

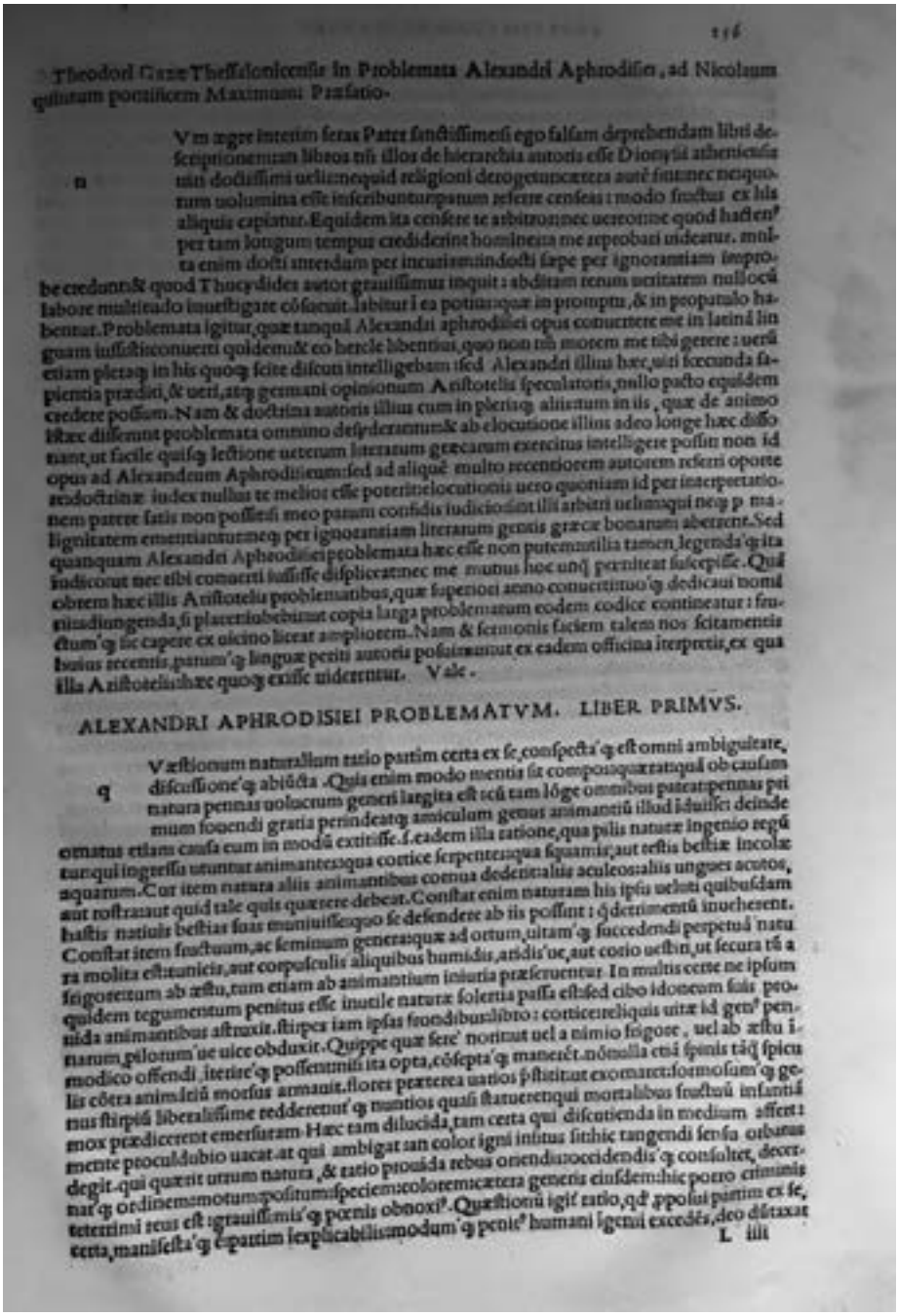
[15] Denique *solvendum omne problema aut* a temperamento, *aut* a formatione, *aut* ab actione, *aut* a ***simil***i una in passione, *aut* a *colore*, *aut* a **sensus** persuasione, *aut per* aequivocationem, *aut* ab actionibus quae ex potentiis **magis vel minus** proficiscuntur, *aut* per id quod ***duri**us aut rarius* aut ***mai**us, aut **min**us, aut a **tempore**, et **aetate**, et consuetudine, aut per **essenti**atum* — hoc novatum verbum paulo durius, eo quod Graeci dicunt 'ousiodes'[112]

[15] *Omne* autem *problema aut* **ex habitu** ipso *solvendum*, *aut* ex coagmentatione *aut* exactione, *aut* **e consensu** erga aliquod ***simil**e*, *aut* **e *colore***, *aut per* **sensus deceptione**m, *aut* per nominis participatum[113], *aut* qua eius rei **vir**es **magis minusve** agant, *aut* qua ***duri**us* quidque *rariusve* fit, *aut* ***mai**us, aut **min**us, aut a **tempore**, et **aetate**, et consuetudine*, aut **essenti**ae ratione,

105 coagmentatione *v.l.* **V$_b$**.
106 simili **V$_e$**.
107 nominis participatu *v.l.* **V$_b$**.
108 quae **V$_e$**.
109 vel **V$_e$**.
110 consuetudine *v.l.* **V$_b$**.
111 ex *om.* **V$_e$**.
112 lisiodes **FV**.
113 anticipatum **Bas**.

	quorum exempla e[114] quaestionibus tum a nobis, tum ab aliis explanatis colligi possunt.	quod est 'per essentiae habitum', usus molliet — *aut* per *accid*ens, *aut* a *simili*bus veluti *in problematis* quae *dic*ta sunt comperies.	*aut* ex *accid*enti *aut* ***simili*um rerum conditione** qualiaque *in problematis dic*untur.
[16] Τούτοις οὖν τοῖς κανόσι *χρησάμενος* [ἐπόμενος] πᾶν ἀπορούμενον δυνήσῃ πρὸς ἀπόδειξιν *τῆς αἰτίας* [*om.*] ἀγαγεῖν.	[16] hisce[115] **igitur** normis ac metis **omne** quod quaeritur probationi potest solutionique mandari.	[16] *has* ***igitur*** regulas secutus **omne** dubitatum ad demonstrationem poteris advocare.	[16] Invenies ***igitur***, si *has* tibi praeponas formulas, quacunque de re ambigatur, vocare in disputatione possis.
[17] Ἐπειδὴ δὲ οὐ μόνον ἀρκεῖσθαι χρὴ τῇ καθόλου μεθόδῳ, *ἀλλ' ἤδη* [ἀλλὰ δεῖ] καὶ τοῖς κατὰ μέρος χειραγωγεῖν τὸν διδασκόμενον, ἀρξόμεθα [ἀρξώμεθα **Mu$_3$**] τῶν λύσεων.	[17] Sed cum non solum ratione quae in **universum** doceat, verum etiam singularum rerum tractatione animus auditoris regendus sit, haec proponenda solvendaque censuimus.	[17] At *quoniam* non satis esse putandum est universalem adhibere doctrinam, sed convenit ei qui doceat particulatim et membratim haec sub *manu*m ad*duce*re, *iam* questiones ac *solutiones* ordiamur.	[17] *Quoniam* vero haud iis tantummodo acquiescendum est quae ad **universum** feruntur, sed tanquam *manu duce*ndus qui eruditur[116], age *iam solutiones* ipsas aggrediamur.

114 et **V$_e$**.
115 His **V$_e$**.
116 egreditur **Bas**.



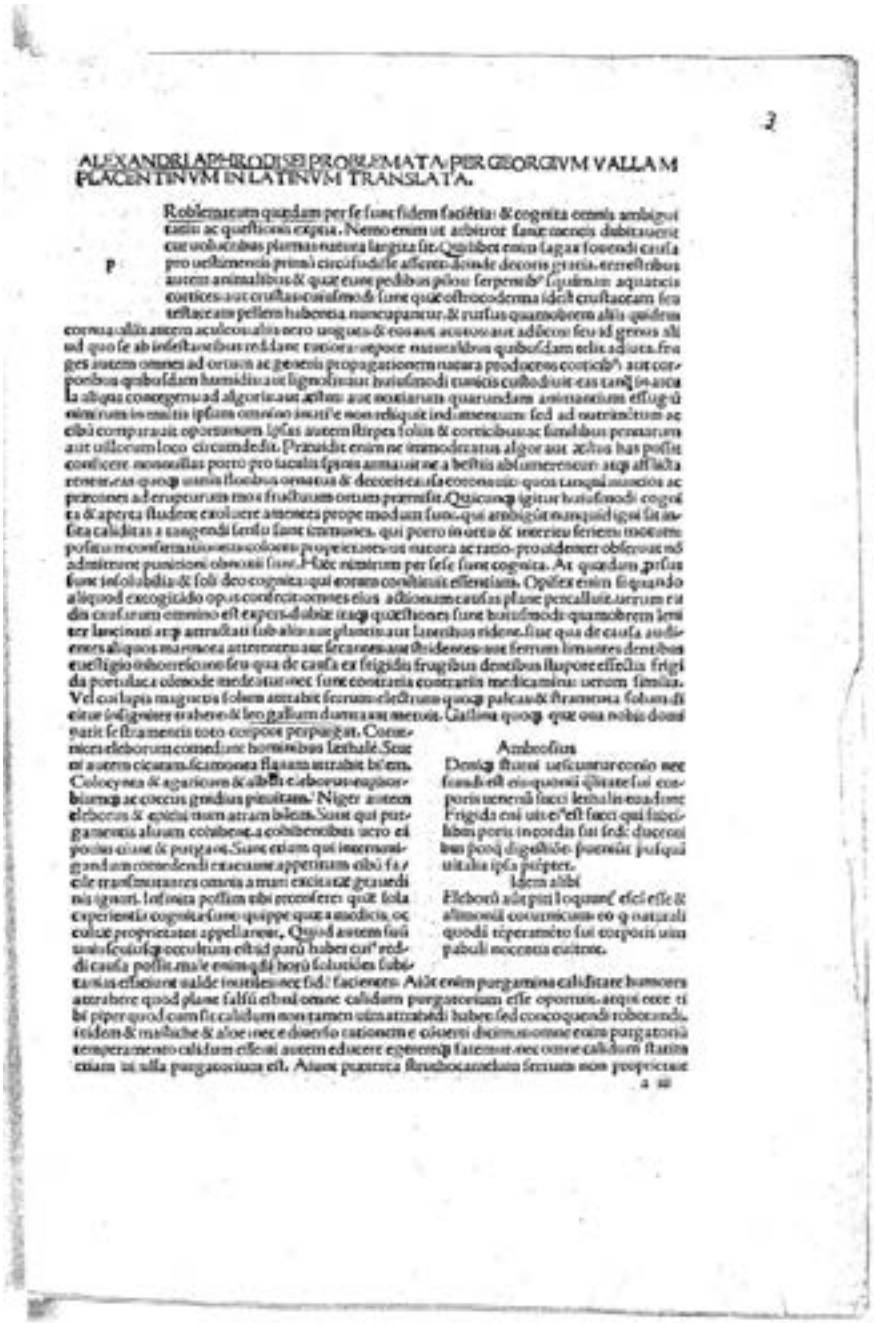
Theodori Gazæ Thessalonicensis in Problemata Alexandri Aphrodisiei, ad Nicolaum quintum pontificem Maximum Præfatio.

Vm agere interim secum Pater sanctissime ego falsam deprehendam libri de scriptionem rum libros nō illos de hierarchia autoris esse Dionysii athenien sis
n tum doctissimi uelim: nequid religioni derogetur cætera autē sint nec nequa quam uolumina esse inscribuntur parum referre censeas: modo fructus ex his aliquis capiatur. Equidem ita censere te arbitror nec uereor me quod hactenus per tam longum tempus crediderint homines ea me reprobari uideatur. multa enim docti intendam per incuriam indocti sæpe per ignorantiam improbe credunt & quod Thucydides autor grauissimus inquit: abditam rerum ueritatem nullo cū labore multitudo inuestigare cōsueuit. Iubitur ea potissimum a me in promptu, & in propatulo habentur. Problemata igitur, quæ tanquā Alexandri aphrodisiei opus conuertere me in latinā lin guam iussisti conuerti quidem & eo hercle libentius, quo non nō morem me tibi gerere: uerū etiam pietatē in his quoq; scire discam intelligebam sed Alexandri illius hæc, uiri secundæ sapientiæ prædicti, & uere, atq; germani opinionum Aristotelis speculatoris, nullo pacto equidem credere possum. Nam & doctrina autoris illius cum in plerisq; aliis tum in his, quæ de animo libris differunt problemata omnino desyderantur & ab elocutione illius adeo longe hæc dissonant, ut facile quisq; lectione ueterum literarum græcarum exercitus intelligere possit non id opus ad Alexandrum Aphrodisiensem sed ad aliquē multo recentiorem autorem referri oporte re doctrinæ iudex nullus te melior esse poterit: elocutionis uero quoniam id per interpretatio nem parere satis non possit mei parum confidis iudicio: sint illi arbitri uelim qui neq; p ma gnitatem eruditionis tuæ neq; per ignorantiam literarum genuis græcæ bonarum aberrent. Sed quanquam Alexandri Aphrodisiei problemata hæc esse non putem nihilominus tamen legenda: quæ ita iudicaui nec tibi conuerti iussisse displicebit: nec me mutus hoc uno permittet fuisse. Quā obrem hæc illis Aristotelis problematibus, quæ superiori anno conuertisti: tuo q; dedicaui nomi ni adiungenda, si placet iubebimus: copia larga problematum eodem codice continebatur: fru ctumq; hic capere ex uicino licebit ampliorem. Nam & sermonis faciem talem nos scitamentis huius recentis, parumq; linguæ periti autoris posuimus ex eadem officina interpretis, ex qua illa Aristotelis: hæc quoq; exisse uiderentur. Vale.

ALEXANDRI APHRODISIEI PROBLEMATVM. LIBER PRIMVS.

Q Væstionum naturalium ratio partim certa ex se conspecta q; est omni ambiguitate, discussione q; abiūcta. Quis enim modo mentis sit compos quæratquā ob causam natura pennas uolucrum generi largita est: cū tam lōge omnibus pateat pennas pti mum fouendi gratia perindeatq; amiculum genus animantiū illud induisse: deinde ornatus etiam causa eum in modū extitisse. s. eadem illa ratione, qua pilis naturæ ingenio regū tanquā ingressa utuntur animantes: squa cortice serpentes: squa squamis: aut testis bestiæ incolæ aquarum. Cur item natura aliis animantibus cornua dederit: aliis aculeos: aliis ungues acutos, aut rostra: aut quid tale quis quærere debeat. Constat enim naturam his ipsis uelut quibusdam hastis natiuis bestias suas munuisse: quo se defendere ab iis possint: q; detrimentū inuchesent. Constat item fructuum, ac seminum genera: quæ ad ortum, uitamq; succedendi perpetuā natu ra molita est: ut nouicia, aut corpusculis aliquibus humidis, aridisue, aut corio uestiri, ut secura tū a frigoris tum ab æstu, tum etiam ab animantium iniuria præseruentur. In multis certe ne ipsum quidem tegumentum penitus esse inutile naturæ solertia passa est: sed cibo idoneum fuis pro uida animantibus attraxit. stirpes iam ipsas frondibus: libro: cortice: reliquis uitæ id genus pen natum, pilorum ue uice obduxit. Quippe quæ fere nonnat uel a nimio frigore, uel ab æstu i modico offendi, iterire q; possent nisi ita opta, cōsepta q; maneret. nōnulla etiā spinis tāq; spicu lis cētera animalia motus armauit, flores præterea uarios p stitit: ut exornet: formosum q; ge nus stirpiū liberalissime redderetur q; nuntios quasi statueret: qui mortalibus fructuū infantiā mox prædicerent emersuram. Hæc tam dilucida, tam certa qui discutienda in medium affert: mente proculdubio uacat. at qui ambigat tam color igni insitus: sithic tangendi sensus: orbatus degit. qui quærit utrum natura, & ratio prouida rebus omnibus: ut occidendis q; consulter, decer nat q; ordinem: motum: positum: speciem: colorem: cætera generis eiusdem: hic porro criminis tetterimi reus est: grauissimis q; pœnis obnoxi⁹. Quæstionū igit ratio, q; ppolui partim ex se, certa, manifesta q; partim ex explicabilis: modum q; penit⁹ humani ingenii excedēs, deo dūtaxat

Fig. 1. Gaza, Translation of Pseudo-Alexander's *Problemata*, from the 1501 Venice edition (Paris, BnF; photo by the author).



ALEXANDRI APHRODISEI PROBLEMATA PER GEORGIVM VALLAM PLACENTINVM IN LATINVM TRANSLATA.

Roblematum quadam per se sunt fidem facientia & cognita omnis ambigui tatis ac questionis expia. Nemo enim ut arbitror sane mentis dubitaverit cui ocul oribus plurimas natura largita sit. Quis libet enim lagax fouendi causa pro ustimentis primi circumfudit se affectu deinde decoris gratia. ceteris autem animalibus & quae sunt pedibus pleni serpentib⁹ squamis aquaticis coriis aut crustaceis consimilibus sunt quae ostreodermata idcirc crustaceam seu testaceam pellem habentia nuncupantur. & rursus quamobrem aliis quidem cornua aliis autem aculeos alis nero ungues & eos aut acutos aut adlecti seu id genus ali ud quo se ab infestantibus tegant sane custodiae gratia naturalibus quibusdam edit adiuta. Species autem omnes ad ortum ac generis propagationem natura produxerit coniugio aut corporibus quibusdam humidis aut lignosis aut huiusmodi cunctis custodiuit eas tamen in aeta la aliqua conegerunt ad algoris aut aestus aut noxiarum quarundam animantium effugium eiusmodi ipsis omnino inutile non reliquit indumentum sed ad nutrimentum ac cibi comparandi oportunum. Ipsas autem strigas solus & corticibus ac frondibus pennarum aut illorum loco circumdedit. Praeuidit enim ne immoderatus algor aut aestus has possit conficere monstillas porro pro tutela spinis armauit ne a bestiis abiumentorum atque aliis teretur. eas quoque varia floribus ornatus & decoris causa coronauit. quos tanquam nuncios ac precones aderuperum mox fructuum ortum praemisit. Quicunque igitur huiusmodi cogni ta & aperta studere exoluere annexa prope modum sunt. qui ambigit nunquid igni sit in sita calditas a tangendi tactu sane immunes. qui porro in ortu & interitu seriem motum possit reconfirmationem colorem proprietatem ut natura ac ratio prouidenter obseruat nō admirare pudicitiae obscuris sunt. Haec nimirum per se sunt cognita. At quaedam prius sunt intelligibilia & soli deo cognita qui eorum conditor existunt. Opifex enim siquando aliquod excogitando opus condecit omnes eius additionum causas plane percalluit. rerum ei dis causarum omnino est expers. Multae itaque questiones sunt huiusmodi quamobrem ieiuni ter lasciuiat atque attractati sub alas aut glandes aut lanethus rideat. sitne qua de causa audi mus aliquos mirandum attrectatu aut feras non aut rideentes aut ferrum limantes dentibus aut eligio odore ferocem seu qua de causa ex frigidis frugibus dentibus stupore effectus frigi da portulaca olemode medentur. nec sunt contraria contrariis medicaminibus. verum similia. Vel cui lapis magnetis solum attrahit ferrum. electrum quoque palcas & stramenta solum di citur indigniore o habere & leo gallum damna aut mentis. Gallina quoque quae ova nobis domi parit sed stramentis toto corpore perpurgat. Comme nicra eleborum comedunt. nec homo ibus lethale. Sunt ut autem cicutam. scammoneam flaxum attrahit bi'em. Colocynta & agaricum & absinthium eleborum anagallidem buglossum ac coccum gradum pituitam. Niger autem elleborus & cyclus nam atram bilem. Sunt qui purgamentis alium cohibent. a cohibentibus uero ea potius citant & purgant. Sunt etiam qui inuentui grandium comedendi exercitium appetitum cibi fa cile transmittantes omnia a mari excitat ac gratiedi nis ignari. Infinita possim ubi percensere quae sola experientia cognita sunt quippe quae a medicis oc cultae proprietates appellantur. Quod autem sui usus scitu sit occultum est id parū habet cur reddi causa possit. nisi enim qui horū solutiles subti tatem cibationi valde inutiles nec fidi faciemus. Abit enim purgantium calidtate humores attrahere quod plane falsū cibui omne calidum purgatorium esse oportuit. atqui esse ti bi piper quod cum sit calidum non tamen uim attrahendi habet sed coquendi roborandi. eodem & malache & aloe nec e diuerso cationem e cibum omne enim purgatorii temperamento calidum esse. Aut esse educere experiri fatemur. nec omne calidum flatus enim in ulla purgatorium est. Aiunt pumicem struthocamelum ferrum non propriae

Ambrosius

Denique ferunt testudinum corio nec fundi est cuiquam dubium quin sui corporis teneri facti lentiis in eandem Frigida esse vim: nec est facti qui subiicibus poris in eandem sui fedi: ducentibus quoque digestibile putauit quicquid uitalia ipsa perpetet.

Idem alibi

Elleborū adeptis loquunt effici esse & alimoniā communicari eo q naturali quodā ieperamēto sui corporis uim pabuli nocentis exuisse.

Fig. 2. Valla, Translation of Pseudo-Alexander's *Problemata*, from the 1488 Venice edition (Paris, BnF; source: Gallica).

ſaltare cogeretur. Hæc quæ prò Epicteto dicerem in præſentia ſuccurrerunt, eaq́ plura nimium fuiſſe intelligo, quàm epiſtolæ ratio poſtularet. Non plura tamen, neq́ pluribus (ut arbitror) explicata, quàm oportuerit. Quæ ſi accipis, mi Scala, coeant iam in fœdera dextræ: ſin reſpuis, age iam, qualem oppugnatorẽ præbueris, talem te Epicteto propugnatorẽ præſtia. Atqui eum quidem & fuiſſe magnũ uirum omnes tradunt, & mihi centies repetitus perpetuò placet. Verendum tamen eſt, ne meus mihi labor, tanquam ſcitus filiolus ſubblãdiatur, idq́ uel autori ipſi apud me gratiam conciliet: tibi uerò, quòd me ad hanc ueluti pugnam prouocaris, gratiam habeo: pertinet enim, id quod & Ariſtoteles ait, ad ingenij profectum, contentioſa diſceptatio. Vt iam diuinè Homerus pugnã ipſam, quòd homines reddat illuſtreis, *ἐυκλεὲα ἔργα* uocet, nec minus egregiè noſter ignobile otiũ dixerit. Quare ut me ſæpe uel irrites, etiam atq́ etiam te rogo. Eſt enim, mi Scala, reluctandum his temporum turbinibus, literarum & philoſophiæ ſtudijs, ut iam nos ipſos nobis, quantum liceat, aſſeramus. Tua uerò opera, quam tu quidem liberaliſſimè, ut ſoles, pollicere, non minus fidenter, cùm uſus uenerit, utar, atq́ ad hanc diem ſum uſus. Vale. Calendis Sextilibus, M.CCCCLXXIX. Feſulis.

ALEXANDRI APHRODISEI SVPER NONNVLLIS PHYSICIS DVBITATIONIBVS, SOLVtionum liber, ab Angelo Politiano in Latinum conuerſus.

PROBLEMATVM alia ſuapte natura credibilia ſunt, & noti, omniſq́ ambiguitatis & quæſtionis expertia. Quis enim, queſo, mentis compos dubiter, cur uolatilib. pennas natura ſit elargita? Quiuis enim prudens dixerit fomenti gratia, quaſi ueſtimentis primò circundata, tum ob ſpeciem, quemadmodũ greſſilibus quoq́ animantibus dati ſunt ulli, ſerpentibus cortices, ſquammæ aquatilibus, aut teſtæ, uelut ijs, quæ teſtacea nuncupant. Cur præterea alijs quidem cornua, alijs autem aculeos, alijs acutos ungueis, aut roſtra, aut eiuſcemodi quippiam tribuerit? hæc enim omnia uelut agnatis quibuſdam haſtilibus, quò ſeſe ipſa ab iniuria tuerentur, armauit. Cumq́ omnes natura fructus, omniaq́ ſemina, tum ad generandũ, tum ad genus excipiendum fabricata foret, corticibus ea, aut corporibus quibuſdam mollibus, aut lignum, aut cutem imitantibus cõmuniuit, & quaſi intra ſcriniolum occuluit, ut rigoris, aut caloris, aut animantium quorundam iniuriam deuitaret. In pleriſq́ autem, ne ipſum quidem inuolucrum reliquit inutile, ſed idoneum cibatui parauit. Plantas uerò ipſas frõdibus, cortice, cæteriſq́ ſimilibus, pinnarum uillorumq́ uicem conueſtiuit, ut quas præuiderat immodico frigore, aut æſtu offendi poſſe, & labefactari: quin & earũ quaſdam, etiam ſpinis quaſi ſpiculis armauit, quibus animantiũ iniuriam propulſarent: florumq́ uarietate, partim ad ſpeciem atq́ ornatum coronauit, partim uti uice præconum inſtantem fructuum paritudinem præmõſtrarent. Igitur qui nota hæc dilucidaq́ ſibi poſtulant explicari, ſunt procul dubio mente capti: qui autem ambigunt, an ſit igni inſitus calor, ñ tangendi non habent ſenſum: qui dubitant, utrum natura ac prouida ratio conſulat ijs rebus quæ oriuntur & occidunt, quiq́ ordinem, motum, poſitum, ductum, colores cæteraq́ his ſimiliã non credunt, ſupplicio digni ſunt. Hæc itaque ſuapte natura nota ſunt. Alia rurſus inexplicabilia, penitus ſoli cognita deo, ſcilicet illorũ eſſentiæ autori. Nam & artifex, qui ſit opus

Fig. 3. Poliziano, Translation of Pseudo-Alexander's *Problemata*, from the 1553 Basel edition (Lyon, Bibliothèque municipale; source: Numelyo).

BARBARA BARTOCCI

Topics and Syllogistic

Agostino Nifo Reading Alexander of Aphrodisias

Alexander of Aphrodisias' Commentary on the *Topics* in the Greek Tradition and the Middle Ages

In the eight books of the *Topics*, Aristotle provides a dialectical method for succeeding in a regimented dialectical practice in which a questioner and an answerer argue on any proposed question concerning logic, ethics, metaphysics or physics. In the first book, the Stagirite introduces and expands upon fundamental notions of his dialectic and philosophy, such as the species of syllogisms, the ten categories and the four predicables[1], but not on topics. As is known, in the *Topics* Aristotle does not offer a definition of *tópos* (*τόπος*), whose description is found in the *Rhetoric* (II 22, 1396b22 and II 26, 1403a18). And he does not clarify the nature of dialectical arguments — e.g., whether they are simple or complex arguments — and of dialectical syllogisms — e.g. whether they are categorical or hypothetical — nor does he explain how topics function in dialectical syllogisms and arguments. Then, in Books II-VII Aristotle lists almost 300 *tópoi* (*τόποι*), which we can describe as entailment patterns for reaching the premises needed for the given conclusion[2]. Finally, in Book VIII he codifies pragmatic rules which the questioner and the answer should follow in dialectically regimented debates. Such dialectical exchanges are carried on through dialectical deductions or syllogisms (*συλλογισμοί*) whose premises are *éndoxa* (*ἔνδοξα*), namely reputable opinions that "are accepted by everyone or by the majority or by the wise — i.e., by all, or by the majority, or by the most notable and reputable of them (*ἐνδόξοις*)"[3].

1 Even though the first book has a theoretical flavour, the *Topics* do not provide a fully-fledged theory of dialectic: "Leur portée se veut exclusivement pratique; ils fournissent une méthode de dialectique, non une théorie de la dialectique" (Aristoteles. *Les Topiques, livres I-IV*, éd. J. Brunschwig, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1967, p. xiii).

2 Ancient as well as modern interpreters disagree on the exact number of the topics mentioned in Books II-VII and Aristotle's text does not offer a criterion for solving the question.

3 Aristotle. *Topics*, I 1, 100a30-b24, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. J. Barnes, vol. 1, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984, p. 167-168; cf. Aristoteles. *Topica*, I 1, 100a19-24, in *Aristoteles latinus*: *Topica*; *Translatio Boethii, fragmentum Recensionis alterius et Translatio anonyma* (Aristoteles Latinus V, 1-3), Brussels-Paris, Desclée De Brouwer, 1969 (hereafter *AL*), p. 5, 1-6,

Barbara Bartocci • University of St Adrews, bb66@st-andrews.ac.uk

Alexander of Aphrodisias in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, ed. by Pietro B. Rossi, Matteo Di Giovanni, and Andrea A. Robiglio, Turnhout, 2021 (*Studia Artistarum*, 45), p. 145-172
© BREPOLS PUBLISHERS
10.1484/M.SA-EB.5.120541

In ancient times, Aristotle's *Topics* and the doctrine of the topics did not receive full attention and appreciation[4]. In the Greek world, Theophrastus and Strato, followed by Sotion, commented upon the tract, as we are told by other ancient writers, mainly by Alexander of Aphrodisias in his commentary on the *Topics*. Alexander's work was written in the mid-third century and is the only ancient commentary on the *Topics* preserved today[5], thus it is enormously valuable not only from the doctrinal, but also from the historiographical viewpoint. On the one hand, Alexander's work carries the testimony of the tradition of the *Topics* before him and of the views of his predecessors on some important subjects related to the *Topics*, such as Theophrastus' account of *tópos*, which we shall address below. On the other hand, Alexander's commentary sheds light on some obscure notions and unclear passages of Aristotle's text, and provides us with Alexander's own opinion on important philosophical matters. Following Alexander, the next major step in the tradition of the *Topics* was Themistius. In the Latin world at the beginning of the new era, topical argumentation fell into the rhetorical, rather than the philosophical camp. This is testified to by Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* as well as Cicero's monography on the topics entitled *Topica* — which was later commented

---

1: "Propositum quidem negotii est methodum invenire a qua poterimus syllogizare de omni problemate ex *probabilibus* […] Probabilia autem <sunt> quae videntur omnibus aut pluribus aut sapientibus, et his vel omnibus vel pluribus vel maxime notis et probabilibus [et praecipuis]." Aristotle supplements this definition in *Topics*, I 10, 104a13-15.

4 On the development of the *topics* in ancient times see S. Ebbesen, *Commentators and Commentaries on Aristotle's Sophistici Elenchi: A Study of Post-Aristotelian Ancient and Medieval Writings on Fallacies*, vol. 1, Leiden, Brill, 1981, p. 106-126; N. J. Green-Pedersen, *The Tradition of the Topics in the Middle Ages: The Commentaries on Aristotle's and Boethius' 'Topics'*, München, Philosophia Verlag, 1984; S. Ebbesen, "The Theory of 'loci' in Antiquity and the Middle Ages", in K. Jacobi (ed.), *Argumentationstheorie: Scholastische Forschungen zu den logischen und semantischen Regelen korrekten Folgerns*, Leiden, Brill, 1993, p. 15-39; S. Rubinelli, *Ars Topica: The Classical Technique of Constructing Arguments from Aristotle to Cicero*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2009; L. Castelli, "Collections of Topoi and the Structure of Aristotle's *Topics*: Notes on Ancient Debate (Aristotle, Theophrastus, Alexander and Themistius)", in *Antiquorum Philosophia: An International Journal*, 7 (2013), p. 65-92. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Laura Maria Castelli, who kindly provided me with a copy of her article.

5 The Greek text of Alexander of Aphrodisias' commentary on the *Topics* has been edited by Maximilian Wallies: Alexander Aphrodisiensis. *In Aristotelis Topicorum libros octo commentaria* (Commentaria in Aristotelem graeca, 2, 2), ed. M. Wallies, Berolini, Reimer, 1891, to which I will refer as: Alexander. *Topicorum*. The textual tradition of Alexander's work is problematic especially for Books V-VIII and it has recently been the research topic of a PhD dissertation written by J.F. González Calderón, *Historia de la tradición textual del comentario de Alejandro de Afrodisias a los Tópicos de Aristóteles*, Getafe, October 2014, available on line at https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=https://e-archivo.uc3m.es/bitstream/handle/10016/20670/gonzalez_topicos_tesis.pdf (accessed on 2/02/2018.) For the English translation of the first book of Alexander's commentary see: Alexander of Aphrodisias. *On Aristotle's Topics 1*, trans. by J.M. Van Ophuijsen, London-Ithaca, Bloomsbury, 2001. On Alexander's commentary see: L. Castelli, "Alexander of Aphrodisias: Methodological Issues and Argumentative Strategies between Ethical Problems and Commentary on the *Topics*", in M. Bonelli (ed.), *Le questioni etiche di Alessandro d'Afrodisia*, Napoli, Bibliopolis, 2014, p. 19-41 (I wish to thank Dr. Castelli for kindly providing me with digital reproductions of her article); on Alexander's logic see K. L. Flannery, *Ways into the logic of Alexander of Aphrodisias*, Leiden-New York-Köln, Brill, 1995.

upon by Boethius. In addition to this, Boethius also composed a monograph, the *De topicis differentiis*, in which he summarizes the Ciceronian and Themistian doctrines of the topics, without taking into account the Aristotelian treatise. The two Boethian monographs on the subject constituted the core of medieval doctrines on the topics in the Latin West until the "rediscovery" of Boethius' translation of Aristotle's *Topics* in the second quarter of the twelfth century. Subsequently, the Aristotelian tract gradually replaced Boethius' own topical works, and entered the curricula of almost all European universities. Thus, the *Topics* were lectured upon in classrooms, and commented upon by masters of the Faculty of Arts. Nevertheless, the Boethian tradition of the topics remained alive, and at times walked hand in hand with the Aristotelian.

During the Middle Ages, Alexander's commentary on the *Topics* was not available in the Latin world[6], only some passages circulated anonymously and were quoted in scholia and commentaries on the *Sophistical Refutations*. One of the main channels by which these short quotes spread seems to have been James of Venice, who was active in the second quarter of the twelfth century[7]. He seems to have translated into Latin many Aristotelian writings, among them perhaps the *Topics*, as well as a collection of Greek scholia to the *Sophistical Refutations* which Latin scholastics considered to be a commentary penned by Alexander of Aphrodisias, although in reality the alleged 'Alexander' "was not the Aphrodisias, and probably no Alexander at all"[8]. Moreover, James seems to have composed his own commentary on the *Sophistical Refutations*, which was greatly inspired by the scholia of the Greek scholar Michael of Ephesus. At present, however, neither the work of 'Alexander' nor that of James is preserved, and the only testimony of their (supposed) existence are some indirect references and textual hints present in other works. The most important trace of these lost works is found in a group of early anonymous Latin commentaries on the *Sophistical Refutations* composed in the second half of the twelfth century, which are also momentous for the tradition of Alexander's commentary on the *Topics*[9]. In glossing the term *probabilia* of *Sophistical Refutations* 165b3, these anonymous commentators propose the same examples of the various types of *éndoxa* given by Alexander in his commentary on

---

6 Alexander's commentary was translated into Arabic in the eighth/ninth century and was known to Averroes who discusses Theophrastus' and Alexander's views on the *τόπος*, in his *Middle Commentary* on the *Topics*.

7 On James of Venice see: L. Minio Paluello, "Iacobus Veneticus Grecus Canonist and Translator of Aristotle", in *Traditio*, 8 (1952), p. 265-304; Ebbesen, *Commentators*, vol. 1, p. 286-289, on which I rely for the tradition of the Greek and Latin scholia to the *Sophistical Refutations* and James' commentary on the Aristotelian work.

8 Ebbesen, *Commentators*, vol. 1, p. 287.

9 Anonymus Cantabrigiensis. *Commentarium in Aristotelis Sophisticos Elenchos*, Cambridge, St. John's College D.12 (87 James), f. 80r-111v (*c.* 1200); Anonymus Aurelianensis (II). *De Paralogismis*, Orléans, BM, ms 283 (mid-twelfth century), ed. S. Ebbesen, "Anonymus Aurelianensis II, Aristotle, Alexander, Porphyry and Boethius. Ancient Scholasticism and twelfth-century Western Europe" in *Chaiers de l'Institut du Moyen Âge grec et latin* (hereafter *CIMAGL*), 16 (1976), p. 1-128; [Anonymus.] *Summa Sophisticorum Elenchorum* (mid-twelfth century), ed. L.M. De Rijk, *Logica Modernorum: A Contribution to the History of*

the *Topics*, without however attributing their paternity to Alexander. Presumably, these anonymous commentators borrowed the exemplifications from "Alexander's" or James' commentaries[10]. Surprisingly though, these examples do not appear in the precise context in which we would expect them to appear, namely at the beginning of commentaries on Aristotle's *Topics*, where the Stagirite describes the *éndoxa*. The earlier known Latin commentaries on the *Topics*, which span from the mid- to the end of the thirteenth century, do not mention Alexander's exemplifications, just as the commentaries written in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries do not[11]. This absence seems to support Ebbesen's hypothesis that books containing "Alexander's" and James' commentaries on the *Sophistical Refutations*, and thus Alexander's examples of the types of *éndoxa*, did not enjoy a wide circulation, and disappeared by the end of the twelfth century. Nevertheless, some ideas introduced in those commentaries eventually became traditional, and thus kept being mentioned at length and often anonymously in commentaries, logical tracts and glosses to the Latin translation of the *Sophistical Refutations*[12].

The Reappearance of the Greek Tradition of the *Topics* in the Latin West: The Commentaries of Alexander and Nifo

Quattrocento Humanists translated anew from Greek into Latin almost all the works of Aristotle, but they never accomplished new renditions of the *Topics*. The first humanistic translation of this treatise, which is a reworking of Boethius' aforementioned translation, was written by Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples in 1503. In the preceding year, Marcus Musurus finished the Latin translation of the first four books of Alexander's commentary on the *Topics*, but it remained unprinted. Musurus was also the chief editor of the *editio princeps* of the Greek text of Alexander's commentary, which was printed by the Aldine press in 1513. During the sixteenth

---

Early Terminist Logic, vol. 1, Assen, Van Gorcum & Corap. B.V, 1972, p. 257-458; Anonymus Parisiensis. *Compendium Sophisticorum Elenchorum* (second half of the twelfth century), ed. S. Ebbesen, "Paris 4720A: A 12th Century Compendium of Aristotle's Sophistici Elenchi", in *CIMAGL*, 10 (1973) p. 1-20.

10 Cf. Alexander. *Topicorum*, p. 18-19, commenting on *Topics* I 1, 100a30-b24, with: Ebbesen, "Paris 4720A", p. 5-6; *Id.*, "Anonymus Aurelianensis", p. 43-44 and 120 (also mentioned in Ebbesen, *Commentators*, vol. 2, p. 386-388); De Rijk, *Logica Modernorum*, p. 273-274. For the direct dependence of these commentaries on Greek scholia and indirectly on Alexander's commentary on the *Topics*, see Ebbesen, "Anonymus Aurelianensis", p. 118-120, and González Calderón, *Historia*, p. 47 and 406.

11 I have scrutinized the following commentaries (for the sake of brevity, I shall refer to them through the reference number in Green-Pedersen's catalogue of commentaries on the *Topics*, in Green-Pedersen, *The Tradition*, p. 382-417): thirteenth century: A.1, A.2, A.4, A.7-A.11, A.13, A.14, A.17, A.18, A.20, plus Johannes Duns Scotus, *Notabilia super libros Topicorum Aristotelis* (Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ott. Lat. 318, f. 247ra-296vb); fourteenth century: A.21, A.24, A.29, A.30, A.32, A.33; fifteenth century: A.35-38, A.42-45, A.47, A.48, A.50, A.52, A.52a, A.55-60, A.64.

12 "Alexander's" and James' commentaries disappeared, "the original books did not move with the current of scholars to Paris and Oxford. There may never have been a copy of them in any of those thirteenth century centres of learning" (Ebbesen, *Commentators*, vol. 1, p. 288).

century, Alexander's commentary was translated, both partially and entirely, by many authors. In 1521, Bartolomeus Zambertus translated but never published Alexander's entire commentary. Twenty years later, in 1541, Guillelmus Doroteus' integral translation was printed in Venice, and a year later in Paris. Lastly, Doroteus' translation, revised by an anonymous, went to print in 1547. Moreover, Iohannes Baptista Rasarius translated Aristotle's *Topics* as well as Alexander's commentary on that work, in 1573[13].

The sixteenth century marked a renewed interest in Aristotle's *Topics*, at least in Italy. Indeed according to Lohr and Green-Pedersen, since the thirteenth century only two manuscripts preserving writings on the *Topics* had been produced in Italian Universities[14]. And as far as I know, there are no commentaries on the *Topics* yet identified which were produced by fifteenth-century masters teaching in Italian Universities[15]. After this long silence, in the sixteenth century the *Topics* reappeared on the philosophical scene thanks to Agostino Nifo. After 1523, when Nifo was in Salerno, he wrote a massive commentary on the entire Aristotelian treatise published for the first time in 1535 and re-printed eight times during the sixteenth century[16]. Similarly to many of his exegetical writings, Nifo's literal commentary on the *Topics* betrays humanistic influences. This is most evident

13 The complete list of Latin translations of Alexander's commentary is provided by F. E. Cranz, "The Prefaces to the Greek Editions and Latin Translations of Alexander of Aphrodisias 1450 to 1575", in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society,* 102/5 (1958), p. 510-546, esp. p. 514; *Id., "Alexander Aphrodisiensis"*, in P.O. Kristeller, *Catalogus translationum et commentariorum: Medieval and Renaissance Latin Translations and Commentaries; Annotated Lists and Guides*, vol. 1, Washington, Catholic University of America Press, 1960, p. 77-135;

14 The one is a sentence commentary, written in the first half of thirteenth century probably at Padua, by the Dominican Gratiadeus de Asculo. The other is a collection of excerpts drawn from the first two books of the *Topics* composed by a Bolognaise Arts master, Iacobus de Placentia. For these commentaries see Green-Pedersen, *The tradition*, A.24, p. 394 and A.25, p. 395. Between 1441-1460 Matthias Kuler copied for Novello Malatesta Burley's *Notulae super libros Topicorum* (Cesena, Biblioteca Malatestiana, S. X. 2, f. 118ra-248va).

15 Green-Pedersen's and Lohr's lists are confirmed by the census done in the *Catalogo di manoscritti filosofici nelle biblioteche italiane*.

16 Augustinus Niphus. *Aristotelis Stagiritae topica inventio in octo secta libros […] interpretata atque exposita*, Venetiis, apud Octavianum Scotum Amadeum, 1535, I will refer to the 1542 edition, Augustinus Niphus. *Commentaria in octo libros Topicorum Aristotelis quibus facile omnis disserendi methodus comparatur …*, Parisius, apud Christianum Wechelum, 1542, hereafter abbreviated as: Niphus. *Topica*. On Nifo see E.P. Mahoney, *Two Aristotelians of the Italian Renaissance: Nicoletto Vernia and Agostino Nifo*, Aldershot-Burlington USA-Singapore-Sydney, Ashgate 2000; M. Palumbo, "Nifo, Agostino", in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 78, Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana-Treccani, 2013; E. De Bellis, *Bibliografia di Agostino Nifo*, Firenze, L.S. Olschki, 2005; on Nifo's logic see J.H. Randall, "The Development of Scientific Method in the School of Padua", in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 1 (1949), p. 177-206; E.J. Ashworth, "Agostino Nifo's Reinterpretation of Medieval Logic", in *Rivista critica di storia della filosofia*, 31 (1976), p. 354-374; L. Jardine, "Humanistic Logic», in C. B. Schmitt, Q. Skinner, E. Kessler, J. Kraye (eds), *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 173-198, esp. 195-198; E. De Bellis, *Il pensiero logico di Agostino Nifo*, Lecce, Congedo Editore, 1997; M. Spranzi, *The Art of Dialectic between Dialogue and Rhetoric: The Aristotelian Tradition*, Amsterdam-Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2011.

in Nifo's philological accuracy and his attention to the original Greek text of the *Topics* which in his commentary accompanies, for the first time in the tradition of this Aristotelian treatise, the Latin translation of Lefèvre d'Etaples, which Nifo modified at times.

Nifo and the babbling commentaries of Medieval Commentators on the *Topics*

Similarly to the preface of the *Dialectica Ludicra*, Nifo's commentary on the *Topics* opens with an *elogium* of true dialectic, namely dialectic that is not divorced from philosophy, but is rather the appropriate method by which the philosopher can reach the truth. In ancient times, says Nifo, Aristotle tried to restore genuine dialectic by separating it from the pseudo-dialectic of the sophists. Akin to Aristotle, Nifo endeavours to preserve authentic dialectic from the corruptions perpetrated by modern sophists, the British logicians. In fact, "Hesberus, Ferebricius, Strodus, Dubmentonius, Suisectius", whose texts Nifo read as a student in Padua, and their recent followers, had limited dialectic to deal with obligations and insolubles, physical and epistemic sophisms. Nifo pursued his aim by going back to the source of true dialectic, the Aristotelian *Topics*, now read in the original Greek text and explained by Alexander of Aphrodisias, the only Greek commentator of the *Topics* whose work survived: "Turpe enim est volentibus exponere Aristotelis libros ut illos audeant interpretari ignorata lingua, in qua Aristoteles scripsit nullisque Graecis expositoribus iter demonstrantibus"[17].

Consistent with his ideas, at least in principle Nifo refused the scholastic exegetical tradition because it was not based on a direct reading of the Greek text of Aristotle, but on inaccurate and misleading Latin translations.

This ignorance of the Greek language, complained Nifo, is the main cause of the erroneous babbling commentaries elaborated by the *imperiti* medieval commentators, whose interpretations he considered to be frequently at variance with Aristotle's words and thoughts. One of Nifo's major criticisms of his predecessors is that they did not clearly differentiate between term and propositional logic, and therefore they interpreted many topics in the light of propositional logic, whilst for Nifo topics fall squarely in the domain of term logic.

Nifo's unveiled aversion to his scholastic predecessors was also grounded on his general willingness to connect himself to the ancient Peripatetics; and in the specific case of the *Topics*, his dislike was corroborated by his personal acquaintance with the

17 Niphus. *Topica*, f. 238rb; an English translation of part of this passage is provided by Jardine, "Humanistic Logic", p. 196-197; a parallel passage is found at f. 236rb. These words square with Nifo's purpose: "grecos authores cum graecis expositoribus, latinos cum latinos intelligere" (quoted in Mahoney, *Two Aristotelians*, *Essay V*, p. 91). Mahoney points out other similar claims in many of Nifo's writings, e.g. in the commentary on the *Sophistical Refutations* Nifo states that "his intention in his logical commentaries has been to labour at expounding Aristotle solely through Aristotle or through one of the Greek commentators" (*ibid.*, p. 90).

different traditions of commenting upon the *Topics*. Many pages of his work reveal how much Nifo was familiar with various thirteenth- and fourteenth-century *expositiones*[18] composed by famous as well as anonymous authors, which he mentioned by name in the closing page of his commentary:

> Vidimus multorum Latinorum expositiones, ut Hedenalphi [sic], ut Angeli camerinatis, Roberti Culuerbini, ut Britannici, ut cuiusdam, quem omnes commentatorem vocant [...] vidimus Albertum cognomento magnum, qui obscurissime hunc librum exposuit [...] vidimus etiam complures externorum cursus quos non ab ratione cursus vocant quia nihil de verbis Aristotelis interpretantur[19].

Nifo knew the obscure commentary of the master of modern commentators (*sacerdos iuniorum*), Albert the Great[20], and those of Albert's *sequaces iuniores*[21], namely the writings of the Augustinian Heremit Angelo of Camerino,[22] the commentary

---

18 Plausibly, Nifo employs the term *expositio* in his technical meaning of literal explanation of the text, which is often accompanied by *dubia* and *quaestiones*. A catalogue of medieval commentaries on the *Topics*, the great majority of which is unprinted, and of *incunabula* can be found in Green-Pedersen, *The Tradition*.

19 Niphus. *Topica*, f. 238rb.

20 Plausibly, Albert composed his paraphrases of the *Topics* between 1264, when he was in the Würzburg Dominican Convent, and 1269, when he went to Cologne. Albert's work is the only *Topics* commentary present in the 1304 taxation list of Paris University (*Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, ed. H. Denifle and E. Chatelain, vol. 2, Paris, Ex typis fratrum Delalain, 1891, n. 642, p. 110) and is one of the most widespread commentaries on Aristotle's text until the sixteenth century. On Albert's commentary on the *Topics* see W. A. Wallace, "Albert the Great's Inventive Logic: His Exposition on the *Topics* of Aristotle", in *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 70 (1996), p. 11-49; J. Brumberg-Chaumont, "Les divisions de la logique selon Albert le Grand", in *Id.* (ed.), *Ad notitiam ignoti: l'Organon dans la translation studiorum à l'époque d'Albert le Grand*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2013, p. 336-416; C. Steel, "Prolegomena to an Edition of Albert's *Topics*", in *Przegląd Tomistyczny*, 21 (2015), p. 69-85. I will quote from: Albertus Magnus. *Topica*, in *Id.*, *Opera omnia*, ed. A. Borgnet, vol. 2, Paris, Vivès, 1890 (hereafter Albertus. *Topica*).

21 "Nifo used a variety of names to classify his predecessors: *Iuniores* seem to be opposed to writers of the classical period; [...] *Sorticolae* (probably logicians who used *Sortes* in their examples) [*e.g.* Marsilius of Inghen and Paul of Venice]" J.E. Ashworth, "Traditional Logic", in Schmitt, Skinner, Kessler, Kraye (eds), *Cambridge History*, p. 143-172, here p. 148, n. 25; cf. also Ashworth, "Agostino Nifo", p. 358. Nifo mentions the *Sorticolae* in various passages of his commentary on the *Topics*, often when dealing with technical logical questions, such as the rules of consequences, e.g. f. 96vb, 190va.

22 The sentence-form commentary on the *Topics* of Angelus of Camerino (d. ca. 1314) dates from the end of the thirteenth century and is preserved in seven manuscripts. It enjoyed a rather wide circulation up at least until the fifteenth century; moreover, excerpts of this commentary were added to the margins of the Cesena manuscript which contains Adenulphus of Anagni's commentary on the *Topics* (cf. *infra* n. 27). I will refer to the manuscript preserved at the Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. Lat. 1057, f. 1ra-198vb, which comes from Marsilius of Inghen's library: "Exposicio thopicorum pro libraria universitatis per me Marsilium de Inghen propria manu", f. 1. On Angelus see O. Weijers, *Le travail intellectuel à la Faculté des arts de Paris: Textes et maîtres (ca. 1200-1500), I, Répertoire des noms commençant par A-B*, Turnhout, Brepols, 1994, p. 63; on his commentary on the *Topics* see Green-Pedersen, *The tradition*, p. 390, A.17.

of the unidentifiable *Britannicus*[23] and the commentary preserved in a Florentine manuscripts in which its authorship is attributed to *Robertus de Cilnachobi*, perhaps a variant spelling of Robert Kilwardby[24]. Nifo read the work of the *latinus Anonymus interpres*, commonly dubbed *commentator,* and whom Nifo wrongly identifies as Giles of Rome[25]. Among the scholastic interpreters he referred to, Nifo displayed a rather charitable attitude toward the *non imperitus interpres* Adenulphus of Anagni, the provost of Saint-Omer on whose request Reginald of Piperno made the *reportatio* of Thomas Aquinas' lectures on the Gospel of Saint John[26]. Nifo also flipped through the folia of many "running commentaries of foreigners", which he found more damaging than useful due to their non-interest in understanding Aristotle's own thought, and their love for *inextricabiles quaestiones* detached from the text[27]. Nifo could also consult Adam de Balsham's bad Latin translation of Averroes' *Middle Commentary on the Topics* (1523): "Vidimus autem Averrois novas quasdam translationes, imo potius blacteritias confusiones, quas cum translator non intellexit, nemo potest eas intelligere"[28].

---

23 I was not able to surely identify the *Britannicus* mentioned only once by Nifo. He could be the *Robertus Anglicus*, whose sentence-form commentary on the *Topics*, written in Paris in the third quarter of the thirteenth century, bears doctrinal resemblances to Adenulphus of Anagni's commentary. The only known manuscript containing *Robertus Anglicus*' commentary is nowadays preserved in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Canon. 403, f. 182ra-221rb. On *Robertus Anglicus* see Green-Pedersen, *The Tradition*, p. 386.

24 The only known copy of Robertus de Cilnacobi's commentary is in Florence: Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Conv. Soppr. B.4.1618, f. 95ra-151rb; on the commentary and its uncertain authorship see Green-Pedersen, *The Tradition*, p. 382, O. Weijers, "Le commentaire sur les 'Topiques' d'Aristote attribué à Robert Kilwardby (ms. Florence, B.N.C. Conv. Soppr. B.4.1618)", in *Documenti e Studi sulla Tradizione Filosofica Medievale*, 6 (1995), p. 107-143, 308-310. Ashworth identifies the *Robertus Culverbinus* mentioned by Nifo in some of his commentaries with Robert Kilwardby: E.J. Ashworth, "*Developments* in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries" in D. M. Gabbay-J. Woods, *Handbook of the History of Logic, vol. 2, Mediaeval and Renaissance Logic*, Amsterdam, North-Holland, 2008, p. 609-44, here p. 615, n. 31.

25 Niphus. *Topica*, f. 2ra. As far as scholars know, Gilles of Rome never commented on the *Topics*.

26 Adenulphus' *lectio*-commentary was produced in Paris around the 1250s, and according to Green-Pedersen and Weijers it was influential in the second half of the thirteenth century, as testified to by the high number of manuscripts containing it. The commentary written by Adenulphus is contained in six manuscripts, listed by Green-Pedersen, *The tradition*, p. 387. According to Ott, the commentary is preserved in two redactions: 1) MSS: Brugge, Perugia, Cesena, Cambridge, Münich; 2) Firenze, which is an abridged version. I used the Cesena manuscript, Biblioteca Malatestiana, Plut. D. XXVI.3, f. 43ra-106vb, which was produced in the fourteenth century; the marginal glosses contain excerpts from the commentary of Angelus of Camerino ("totum quod est in marginibus istius libri est additum de scripto fratri Angeli de Camerino in 4 primis libris et in 8", f. 106vb; for Angelus see *supra*, n. 23) and then owned by Giovanni Marco da Rimini (d. 1474), Novello Malatesta's physician. On Adenulphus see at least M. Grabmann, "Adenulf von Anagni, Propst von Saint-Omer (†1290). Ein Freund und Schüler des hl. Thomas von Aquin", in *Id., Mittelarlterlichen Geistesleben*, vol. 3, München, M. Hüber, 1956, p. 306-322; L. Ott, "Die Wissenschaftslehre des Adenulf von Anagni", in *Mélanges offerts à Étienne Gilson de l'Académie Française*, Toronto-Paris, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies — Libraire Philosophique J. Vrin, 1959, p. 465-490, p. 466 for the two different redactions of Adenulphus' commentary on the *Topics*; Weijers, *Le travail intellectuel*, p. 32-33; *Ead.*, "Le commentaire", p. 114-119; *Ead.*, «The Evolution».

27 Niphus. *Topica*, f. 238rb.

28 *Ibid.*

Typically, Nifo presented the respective positions of the Latin commentators on a particular problem or topic, which he often dismissed as being either undercut by textual misunderstandings, pointless, or/and distortive of or in disagreement with Aristotle's text. Moreover, Nifo normally presented the subdivisions of the various *loci* proposed by Adenulphus and the other Latin interpreters[29].

When the scholastic tradition diverges from or even contrasts with the exegesis of Alexander, rarely did Nifo endeavour to harmonize the conflicting views, and rather preferred to align himself with Alexander's interpretation[30]. A relevant example of Nifo's attitude is found in his exegesis of a topic of the sixth book. Here, Aristotle gives the following strategy for checking whether a definition is well formed: "See, further, whether the given differentia indicates a certain 'this' rather than a quality; for it seems that the differentia always expresses a quality"[31]. Medieval commentators read this phrase in the Boethian Latin translation of the *Topics* as: "Videndum autem et si non quale quid sed *hoc quid*[32] significat assignata differentia; videtur enim quale quid omnis differentia significare"[33]. Albert the Great and Adenulphus deemed it to be a topic "from the difference compared to individuals" and consisting in inspecting if in the given definition the difference signified a single item (*hoc aliquid*) rather than a quality[34]. Nifo refused this interpretation on the basis of a philological remark by Alexander, following which Nifo stated that the *tode* (*τόδε*) should not be rendered with *hoc aliquid*, as Boethius erroneously did, but rather with *ipsum quid*, which properly signifies the essence of a thing. This modification of the translation inevitably entangles a reinterpretation of Aristotle's topical strategy, which Nifo considered a topic based on the mode of predicating the difference. This adjustment, in turn, involves a reformulation of the (topical) principle specified in the strategy, which for the Medievals consists in considering whether in the given definition the difference is predicated in respect of quality (*praedicatur in quale quid*), whilst for Nifo it consists in considering whether the difference is predicated in respect of the essence (*praedicatur in eo quod quid*)[35].

---

29 For some examples of Nifo's refusal of his predecessors, cf. f. 80vb, 101rb-va, 104rb-va, 110vb, 155rb, 157rb, 195rb.

30 For some examples, cf. f. 39rb, 86va, 89va, 95va-vb, 112rb-va, 122ra-rb, 132rb, 141ra-vb, 143rb-va, 166va, 207ra, 232vb.

31 *Topics*, VI 6, 144a20-22, in *Complete Works*, p. 95. Regarding the syntagm "a certain thing", the manuscripts tradition presents two *lectiones*, *tode* (*τόδε*) and *tode ti* (*τόδε τί*), whose philosophical relevance has been emphasised by Jacques Brunschwig, in Aristoteles. *Les Topiques, livres V-VIII*, éd. J. Brunschwig Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2007, p. 226, n. 3.

32 *Quid*] *Aliquid* in a single manuscript of Boethius' translation of the *Topics*.

33 *AL*, p. 126,14-16 and the critical apparatus. The majority of the manuscripts preserving Boethius' translation of the *Topics* have *quid*, three manuscripts have *quod* for *quid*, and only one has *aliquid quidem* for *quid*.

34 "Consequenter <Aristoteles> inspicit in differentiam comparatam ad individuum et dat talem considerationem: *considerandum est si differentia assignata non significat quale quid sed hoc aliquid*. Nam si sic, non est differentia bene assignata [non significat quale quid sed hoc aliquid *scr. exp.* C] et reddit causam: *quia omnis differentia videtur quale quid significare*" (Adenulphus. *Topica*, f. 84rb).

35 Niphus. *Topica*, f. 173ra.

Alexander, the Great Interpreter of Aristotle: A Shade of Light on Obscure Words

Nifo's appreciation for Alexander is consistently expressed in the *Commentaria* and his reliance upon Alexander's commentary on the *Topics* is openly acknowledged. But how deep is his indebtedness to the ancient interpreter, whom Nifo deemed the only exegete who reached the thought of Aristotle and offered a correct understanding of his words?

For anyone who parallels Alexander's and Nifo's writings it is surely plain that not infrequently Nifo's commentary is a mere translation of Alexander into Latin. Indeed, Nifo often borrows word by word entire sections of Alexander's work. Alternatively, he paraphrases them, sometimes he shortens Alexander's text and expressly refers the reader to it for a deeper account of the matter at hand. At other times Nifo fleshes out the ancient commentary with his own thought or with questions taken from medieval commentaries. Alexander's work, then, is often by Nifo used for completing some elliptic passages of Aristotle's text, and for shedding some light on obscure Aristotelian phrases, notions and technical terms[36]. And not rarely, Nifo endorses Alexander's explanations that go beyond Aristotle's words, for example those that widen the applicability of the *loci*.

Nifo's allegiance to Alexander, however, does not prevent him from criticizing Alexander's exegeses nor from departing from them[37]. At times, this is due to doctrinal divergences, as in the case of the integration of Stoic and Aristotelian syllogistic attempted by Alexander and refused by Nifo. At times, however, Nifo's departure from Alexander's text has different reasons. At the beginning of Book II of the *Topics*, Aristotle warns about two errors to be avoided in proposing dialectical problems, one of which is making false statements by saying "that something belongs to a thing which does not belong to it"[38]. In supplementing this caveat with some examples, Alexander says that it is an error to affirm and maintain that pleasure is a goal, or to state that motion does not happen in a void or that the soul is separable from the body and is immortal and so on. Interestingly, Nifo repeated Alexander's examples but did not mention the one on the (im)mortality of the soul[39]. Probably, he cautiously decided to overlook these words, thereby not leaving Alexander exposed to attack from his adversaries, in a period in which intense debate had risen around the soul's immortality, as Nifo knew from personal experience.

This hypothesis finds some support in Nifo's approach to other no less controversial passages of the *Topics*, which he elucidates by following Alexander's

---

36 For example, f. 83ra, 87ra, 96vb-96ra, 107va, 116ra, 159va, 191va, 234rb.

37 For example, f. 70ra, 70rb-va, 81rb, 106vb-vb, 122vb, 178ra, 185rb, 233ra.

38 Aristotle. *Topics*, II 1, 109a27-33, here p. 35-36, in *Complete Works*, p. 20.

39 Alexander. *Topicorum*, p. 133-134; Niphus. *Topica*, f. 39vb-40ra; cf. also f. 48rb. A more detailed parallel focusing on the treatment of the soul in Alexander's and Nifo's writings should be drawn on their commentaries on Book IV; for Alexander's treatment of the soul in the fourth book of his commentary see C. Militello, *Dialettica, genere e anima nel commento di Alessandro di Afrodisia al IV libro dei «Topici» di Aristotele*, Milan, Vita e Pensiero, 2017, p. 129-160.

interpretations. A telling case is the famous line of Book IV of the *Topics* in which Aristotle affirms that "even God and the good man are capable of doing bad things, but that is not their character"[40]. These words are part of a topic whose strategy consists of inspecting whether, in a dialectical discussion, the opponent wrongly assigns something blameworthy or objectionable to a potentiality, as when he calls 'thief' someone in virtue of his capability to discretely steal other people's belongings. Bad men, says Aristotle, are always said to be bad "in respect of their choice" and not in virtue of their capability of doing bad things, "for even God and the good man are capable of doing bad things, but this is not their character". In the Middle Ages, Aristotle's claim that "potest enim et deus et studiosus prava agere, sed non sunt huiusmodi" was taken out of its original context and thus the possibility for God to *prava agere* and *eligere*, namely to sin, became the object of debate in extra-logical works, such as theological writings[41]. Nifo begins to explain Aristotle's words by saying that any given person is potentially capable of bad actions (*prava agere*) as well as of good actions, since any potentiality is a potentiality for contraries alike, *ut Alexander probat*. Accordingly, the person who never chooses or actually performs a bad action although he could, deserves the highest praises. And this, continues Nifo by reporting Alexander's opinion, holds true even in the specific case of God. God is indeed capable of performing good actions, therefore God should be capable of performing bad actions too, since the potentiality for both contraries is one and the same[42]. Nifo specifies that to acknowledge that God can *prava agere*, as he Nifo does, does not imply the acknowledgment that God is *pravus*, since in order to be *pravus* God should have the capacity to perform evil actions by choice (*eligere prava*), a capacity that Nifo denies to God. It is telling that Nifo legitimates his elucidation by appealing to Alexander's authoritative account, when he could equally have chosen from among the explanations provided by highly reputed Christian commentators, such as Albert the Great, and Doctors of the Church, such as Aquinas[43]. Instead, Nifo merely mentions Albert's interpretation

---

40 Aristotle. *Topics*, IV 5, 126a34-36, in *Complete Works*, p. 58. I wish to thank Eva Del Soldato for bringing this passage and its historically problematic exegesis to my attention. For a detailed reconstruction of the exegetical tradition of this passage from Thomas Aquinas until the seventeenth century, see E. Del Soldato, "Saving the Philosopher's Soul: The *De pietate Aristotelis* by Fortunio Liceti", in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 78 (2017), p. 531-546, esp. p. 543-546.

41 *AL*, p. 79, 21-22; J. Hamesse, *Les Auctoritates Aristotelis. Un florilège médievale. Étude historique et édition critique*, Louvain-Paris, Publications Universitaires, 1974, p. 326, n. 68. On Aquinas', Suárez' and Liceti's exegesis of the extracted sentence see Del Soldato, "Saving".

42 Alexander. *Topicorum*, p. 348-349; the idea that potentiality is capable of contraries traces back to Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, IX 9, 1051a4-17.

43 Angelus de Camerino answers the question "Utrum deus possit prava agere ut videtur velle Philosophus" by saying that "istud exemplum multipliciter solet exponi. Primo sic ut dicatur quod deus potest prava agere permissive non autem effective […] Secundo distinguendo de prava actione, nam in prava actione sunt duo scilicet actio et deformitas […] Tertio ut dicatur quod deus est causa prave actionis, sicut nauta per suam essentiam est causa periculi […] Quarto ut dicatur quod deus possit prava agere, que licet essent prava secundum istum ordinem, prout tamen essent facta a deo essent bona. Quinto sic ut dicatur quod deus possit prava agere […] Sexto ut hic accipitur deus pro corpore celesti vel prout quocumque virtuoso et tunc dicetur prout deus idest studiosus" (Angelus. *Topica*, f. 97rb). The sixth interpretation

along with two alternative readings probably borrowed from Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*, where Thomas explains Aristotle's controversial words. Nifo merely hints at the closeness between his and Albert's reading of the passage, but he does not explicitly connect them nor does he indicate his preference for any of the three interpretations of medieval authors, and eventually prefers to delegate the reply to the question to theologians[44].

The Boethian Tradition of the Topics in the Middle Ages

Medieval commentators of the *Topics* did not share deep reflections on the nature of the *locus* and on its function in arguments, and their brief often standardized accounts of the *loci* relied on Boethius, often mediated by Peter of Spain's *Tractatus*. In his commentary on Cicero's *Topica,* as well as on his monograph *De topicis differentiis*, Boethius states that a topic "provide[s] force and order" to an argument or a syllogism, of which the *locus* is therefore the "foundation" (*sedes*). He specifies that a *locus* can "be understood partly as a maximal proposition, partly as the differentia of a maximal proposition"[45]. Maximal propositions[46] are like axioms, namely they are self-evident, indemonstrable principles suitable for imparting force to arguments[47]. The differences of maximal propositions (*locus differentiae*) are conceived of by Boethius as semantic

---

was endorsed by Adenulphus (*Topica*, f. 72ra-rb) and Robertus de Cilnacobi (*Topica*, f. 121rb: "Cum autem dicit Aristoteles quod deus et studiosus prave agere possunt, intelligit per deum studentem vel sapientem").

44 Niphus. *Topica*, f. 119va-120ra; Thomas de Aquino. *Summa Theologae*, *Prima pars*, q. 25, a. 3, ad 2. Also in another passage Nifo avoided mixing the philosophical and theological, and kept philosophical and theological arguments apart. In commenting on *Topics* IV 1, 121a10-19 — concerned with 'partaking' as an asymmetric relation between species and genus, Nifo responds to a theological objection against Aristotle's text, by specifying that according to theologians, the notion of participation is twofold, namely formal and virtual, and that creatures only partake of God's essence virtually: "Aristoteles vero diceret nullam rem creatam participare dei essentia, quoniam ipse non novit ipsum participare virtualiter, sed solum ipsum participare formaliter" (Niphus. *Topica*, f. 100rb). A few lines earlier, Nifo had similarly kept apart dialectic and metaphysics. Aristotle's claim that "of everything that is, *being* and *one* are predicated (de omnibus quae sunt *ens* et *unum praedicantur*)" (*ibid*., 121a18-19, in *Complete Works*, p. 47; *AL*, p. 65, 26-27, emphasis added), required addressing the question of transcendentals. Nifo mentioned the issue briefly, since "haec negotium nostrum transcendunt" (Niphus. *Topica*, f. 100rb; cf. also f. 101vb-102ra). Dialectic, indeed is concerned with the *modi preadicandi* rather than with the *res* themselves (*ibid.*, f. 40rb).

45 "Argumenti enim sedes partim maxima propositio intelligi potest, partim propositionis maximae differentia" (Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius. *De Topicis Differentiis*, in *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 64, 1174-1216 (hereafter Boethius, *DTD*), here lib. 2, 1185A (Engl. trans. in E. Stump, *Boethius' De topicis differentiis*, Ithaca-London, Cornell University Press, 1978, here p. 46). On Boethius' *locus* see Stump, "Dialectic and Boethius' *De topicis differentiis*", in *Id*., *Boethius*, p. 179-204; Green-Pedersen, *The Tradition*, p. 39-82; Ebbesen, "The Theory"; F. Magnano, *Il De topicis differentiis di Severino Boezio*, Palermo, Officina di Studi Medievali, 2014.

46 Boethius, Nifo and Medieval logicians in general understood and used the term 'proposition' differently from us: for them, propositions are token-sentences.

47 Boethius. *DTD*, lib. 2, 1185A-D, Stump, *Boethius*, p. 46-47.

categories, such as genus, species, definition, cause useful for grouping the various maxims[48]. Unfortunately, Boethius does not provide any theoretical explanation but only practical examples of how *loci* and syllogisms relate to each other in the elaboration of arguments[49]. The Boethian doctrine of the topics depends mainly on the Ciceronian and Themistian traditions of the topics, and the Aristotelian *Topics* do not directly influence any of Boethius' monographic writings devoted to the topics. In the Middle Ages, this ambiguous nature of the Boethian *locus* is mirrored in the ambiguity of the term *locus*. Angelus of Camerino provides us with a clarifying enumeration of the four senses assigned to *locus* at his time, which however is more useful from a lexicographic than from a conceptual viewpoint. Firstly, says Angelus, a topic is the maximal proposition; secondly, it is the difference of the maximal proposition; thirdly, the term *locus* amounts to the Aristotelian term *consideratio*; finally, a topic is the middle term of a syllogisms:

> Notandum quod locus potest accipi multipliciter. Uno modo idem est quod maxima, alio modo idem est quod differentia maximae [...], alio modo sumitur pro consideratione et isto modo sumpsit Philosophus prius [*scil.* books II-VII] locum [...], alio modo idem est quod medium[50].

The Greek Tradition of the Topics: Theophrastus', Alexander of Aphrodisias' and Agostino Nifo's Concept of *locus*[51]

Topic as principle and element

The lack of theoretical analysis in medieval commentaries is counterbalanced by Nifo's work. From his standardly structured discussion of the hundreds of *loci* listed in Books II-VII of the *Topics*, a structure which more or less relies on that of Alexander, we can extrapolate four features of each topic according to Nifo and Nifo's Alexander: 1) the *locus terminus*: it is the label or name of the topic, which introduces the topical strategy through the preposition *ex*; 2) the *locus propositio* or *maxima*: the topic-principle or propositional topic is a proposition

48 "The Differentiae of maximal propositions are called Topics, and they are drawn from the terms that make up the question [...] There are many propositions which are called maximal, and these differ among themselves; and all the Differentiae by which they differ among themselves we call Topics" (Boethius, *DTD*, lib. 2, 1186A, Stump, *Boethius*, p. 47-48).

49 For Stump, a topic, especially the *locus differentiae*, serves for finding "the genus of intermediate appropriate to th[e] argument" and the appropriate maximal proposition that secures the dialectical argument, which is usually a categorical syllogism. Cf. Boethius. *DTD*, lib. 1, 1182C, Stump, *Boethius*, p. 42.

50 Angelus. *Topica*, f. 169va. This quadripartition was not introduced by Angelus himself; it is also found in Robertus de Cilnacobi (*Topica,* f. 140a-b) who enumerates the four meanings of locus as *maxima et differentia maximae <et> consideratio et medium*.

51 I wish to express my sincerest gratitude to Dr. Laura Maria Castelli, who was so kind to share me with a copy of her insightful introduction to her forthcoming English translation and commentary of the second book of Alexander's commentary on the *Topics*.

that expresses the essence of the topic; for any single topic there can be one or more propositional topic, which not infrequently is omitted by Aristotle and supplemented by Alexander and/or Nifo; 3) the *exemplum*: it is an application of the topic to a specific question, which often offers a qualified and restricted propositional topic, *maxima contracta*; 4) the *utilitas*: it is a specification of the demonstrative or refutative scope of the topic, often supplemented by Nifo's and Alexander's remarks on the range of its applicability and validity. We will briefly turn below to these features of the *loci*.

Nifo develops an elaborate reflection upon the nature of the *locus* at the beginning of Book II of the *Topics*, where he discusses at length the *locus terminus* and the *maxima sive dignitas dialectica*. Despite the Boethian terminology employed, in his treatment of the *locus* Nifo never mentions the Cicero-Boethian view but exclusively refers to the Theophrastean-Aphrodisean notion of *tópos*.[52] Actually, Nifo's account is a literal rendition in Latin, with a few changes, of the Theophrastean account of *tópos* which is provided by Alexander at the beginning of his commentary on Book II of the *Topics*:

> [**Cit. 1**] Alexander itaque definiens locus, dicit: *locus* est *principium* et *occasio argumenti*. Vocant [*scil.* Alexander et Theophrastus] autem 'argumentum' dialecticum syllogismum. Propterea Theophrastus dicit "*locus* (α) est *principium* quoddam et[53] *elementum*, a quo *accipimus principia syllogizandi* (β) unumquodque problema, circunscriptione quidem ac quantitate determinatum, contractione ad species indeterminatum". Verbi causa, hic est locus (α_1): si contrarium contrario inest, et contrario contrarium. Est autem hic *locus* (α_1) *propositio* universalitate quidem determinata, quoniam de contrariis universaliter enunciatur, contractione vero ad species indeterminata, quoniam non de his vel illis contrariis dicitur, sed nos a tali propositione occasionem accipientes argumentari de unoquoque contrariorum poterimus. Si enim quaeratur de bono si prodest an non, nos occasionem sumentes ab illo universali ac indeterminato loco (α_1) *accipiemus propositionem*, quae sequitur ad *locum universalem*, hanc videlicet (β_1): si malum laedit, bonum prodest, sed malum laedit, igitur bonum prodest [...] Haec Alexander et Theophrastus dixerunt de loco[54].

---

52 Interestingly, Nifo seems to consider Theophrastus' and Alexander's views as identical, and to disregard a major difference between them. As is well known from Alexander's report of Theophrastus' view, Theophrastus thought that a *tópos* ideally consists in a principle-topic, properly called *tópos*, and in an investigation-instruction, *paraggelma* (*παράγγελμα*) that indicates to the answerer or respondent the strategy to adopt. For Theophrastus, the term *tópos* only qualifies the topic-principle and not the investigative-instructions, whilst for Alexander the term *tópos* properly attaches to both the investigation-instruction and the principle-topic. As shown by many scholars, Boethius' discussions of the *locus* in the *DTD* tries to harmonize the Ciceronian rhetorical and the Themistian philosophical traditions of the topics. Boethius, then, aligns himself with Cicero in considering the *locus* as mainly the *locus differentia*.

53 *ἤ* in the original Greek text of Alexander: Alexander. *Topica*, 126, 14.

54 Niphus. *Topica*, f. 38ra-rb (I have slightly modified the punctuation and added numbers, Greek letters and emphasis); *verbatim* from Alexander. *Topica*, p. 126, 11-127,16. For an analysis of this passage, see P. Slomkowski, *Aristotle*'s Topics, Leiden-New York-Köln, Brill, 1997, p. 64; Ebbesen, "The Theory", p. 30.

As emerges from these words, in the views of Theophrastus, Alexander, and Nifo, a *locus* (α) is a principle and an element, as Aristotle describes it in the *Rhetoric*, where he says that a *tópos* is an element (*στοιχείον*) "embracing a large number of particular kinds of enthymeme".[55] Since rhetorical enthymemes have their counterpart in dialectical syllogisms[56], by analogy we can say that a *tópos* is an element (*στοιχείον*) under which particular dialectical syllogisms fall. Aristotle's words, however, leave us with the task of elucidating what a *stoikeion* is[57]. In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle affirms that just as "the primary demonstrations, each of which is implied in many demonstrations" are the elements of demonstrations[58], so "those geometrical propositions, the proofs of which are implied in the proofs of the others" are the elements of geometrical proof[59]. By analogy, we can say that the primary or maximal (dialectical) propositions are axiom-like propositions used in dialectical arguments.

A *locus* is not only an element, but it is also a *principium* — as Alexander and Nifo themselves affirm. In his writings, the Stagirite equates the term *stoikeion* to *archè* (*ἀρχή*)[60] and the same synonymic use of the terms *elementum* and *principium* is present in Nifo's work: "Et per 'elementum' principium exponit Alexander. Est autem principium maxima propositio, quae in dialecticis vaga et communis, in scientiis vero propria propositio est"[61]. Thus, for Alexander and Nifo the *locus* (α) *qua* element and principle is a general rule, an axiom-like proposition which only spells out the relation between the generic terms but not between lower terms, e.g. specific terms, and it is therefore unqualified in this respect[62]. For instance, the topic-principle (α_1), "If the contrary (~*P*) belongs to the contrary (~*s*), then the contrary (*P*) belongs to the contrary (*s*) too", is qualified insofar as it concerns contraries; yet it is unqualified with regard to the specific pair of contraries concerned, e.g. health-sickness, odd-even, black-white. In virtue of its generic determinateness and specific indeterminateness, the topic-principle (α) can be the source of many specific principles (β) which the dialectician can use for arguing in favour or against a thesis about any subject matter whatsoever in dialectical discussions:

> [**Cit. 2**] Propositio communis locus est, per quem syllogismorum diversorum problematum reminisci facit [...] Qui communem propositionem habet,

---

55 Aristotle. *Rhetoric*, II 26, 1403a18, in *Complete Works*, vol. 2, p. 104; cf. also *Ibid.*, II 22, 1396b22.

56 Aristotle. *Rhetoric*, I 2, 1358a15.

57 Here I am following Slomkowski's interpretation of the Aristotelian *tópos* (Slomkowski, *Aristotle* ch. 2), which has manifold points of contact with Nifo's explanations of the *Topics*.

58 Aristotle. *Metaphysics*, V 3, 1014a35-b1, in *Complete Works*, vol. 2, p. 62.

59 *Ibid.*, II 3, 998a25-28, in *Complete Works*, vol. 2, p. 33.

60 Slomkowski, *Aristotle*, p. 49, esp. n. 29.

61 Niphus. *Topica*, commenting on *Topics*, IV 1, 121b13, f. 101vb; cf. also f. 170ra, commenting on *Topics*, VI 5, 143a12: "Quod vero ad verba attinet, per elementa, loca intelligit, quoniam loca, elementa et principia et occasiones sunt, quibus ad problemata argumentamur".

62 Nifo's analysis of the topical relations remains on a semantic level; he does not specify nor does he offer any hints for understanding if he admitted the isomorphism between language, thought and reality.

> non solum ad unum sed ad omnia problemata facultatem habet. Ut qui sciverit (β_2): si sanabile bonum, aegrum malum, syllogismum habet ad hoc problema tantum, at qui locum scierit, sicut (α_1): contrarium in contrario, ita contrarium in contrario, syllogismum quidem non habet, sed principium (α) syllogismorum et syllogismorum occasionem, non solum ad unum, sed ad plura problemata[63].

In [**Cit. 1**] and [**Cit. 2**], all mirroring passages of Alexander's own commentary, the same topic-principle (α_1) is employed in two different questions, namely whether what is good is beneficial or not and whether disease is harmful or not. And β_1 and β_2 are two among all the possible instances contained in α. How then does Nifo see the Theophrastean-Alexandrian topic-principle (α) as related to the *maxima contracta* (β)?

Container and Contained: The Topic-Principle and the Contracted/Specified Topic

Some lustra ago, Sten Ebbesen pointed out that the Theophrastean doctrine of the *loci* "raises the question how the relation between maxims and the associated syllogistic premises is to be described; in what sense does the former "contain" the latter?"[64]. The same difficulty was addressed with by Nifo some centuries earlier, who asked how the *maxima contracta* (β), "quae est pars syllogismi dialectici, est loco universali sive maximae universali [*scil.* α] contigua". Reshaping this question in Aristotelian terms we can ask: how can many dialectical syllogisms fall under a single *tópos*?

According to Nifo, the relation between α and β can be unpacked in terms of 1) containment: β is "contigua occasionaliter et contractive" to α; and 2) identity: β is "contigua per identitatem" to α, namely they only differ on the basis of their lower or higher level of generality. Nifo seems to show preference for the former solution based on the containment relation, which he explicitly borrows from Gilles of Rome's commentary on Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and, implicitly, from Alexander's commentary. According to this view, β is contained or entailed in α in power and potentiality, and we can add like forms that are virtually contained in matter, or in a more Porphyryan way, like a genus virtually contains its species[65]. Usually, Alexander and Nifo express the topic-principle (α) as a conditional proposition or

---

63 Aristotle. *Topics*, VIII 14, 163b17-33, in *Complete Works*, vol. 1, p. 135-136; Niphus, *Topica*, f. 236va-237ra; cf. Alexander. *Topicorum*, p. 585-586. On this passage see Slomkowski, *Aristotle*, p. 46-47. Nifo's exegesis is completely different from that of medieval commentators such as Adenulphus (*Topica*, f. 105vb-106rb) and Albert.

64 Ebbesen, "The Theory", p. 31.

65 The containment-relation mentioned by Nifo seems different from the so-called "containment-criterion", the latter being one of the (at least) three criteria elaborated upon by Medievals for establishing the validity of a consequence, which states that a consequence is valid (*bona*) if the consequent is contained (*intelligitur/includitur*) in the antecedent. In Nifo's account, the *relata* of the containment-relation are not two propositions linked by the *nota illationis*, but a conditional and its instances. For the "containment

as a subject-predicate proposition expressible in conditional form[66]. Syntactically, Alexander and Nifo express the topic-principle (α) as a conditional proposition or as a conditionalizable subject-predicate proposition. This conditional proposition spells out the type of semantic relation obtaining between the extreme terms of the antecedent and consequent of the conditional, e.g. the relation of contrariety between the predicates and/or the subjects of the antecedent and consequent[67].

Accordingly, the *maxima contracta* (β) is a conditional proposition as well, or a subject-predicate proposition expressible in such form[68], which specifies the relation expressed by the topic-principle. From this perspective, the claim that α contains β means that the general conditional (α) entails the contracted conditionals ($\beta_1, \ldots, \beta_n$) as its instances. Consequently, the logical statuses of the contracted conditionals (β) depends on the logical status of the general conditional (α):

> [**Cit.3**] Respondet Aegidius primo Rhetoricorum quod tales propositiones particulares, hoc est contractae, continentur in universali propositione, quae maxima dicitur et locus, potentia et virtute, quatenus propositio universalis est occasio ut accipiatur haec contracta pro vera, quod Alexander hic asserit. Dicit enim omnes has et tales contractas propositiones, potentia et indeterminate contineri in universali loco, et hac ratione dicitur illi contigua, quoniam si universalis locus verus est, occasio est ut haec particularis propositio sit vera[69].

The material analysed and discussed so far clearly shows that Nifo assigns a heuristic function to the *loci* in relation to dialectical syllogisms. At this point we can turn our attention to the nature of the topics and of dialectical syllogisms.

---

criterion" see C. Dutilh Novaes, "Medieval Theories of Consequence", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2016 Edition), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/consequence-medieval/>.

66 Niphus. *Topica*, f. 60va, 61ra.

67 Whilst for Nifo the *locus praeceptus* is a molecular proposition, the Boethian *maxima propositio* is almost exclusively subject-predicate proposition: "To think of Boethius' predicative maximal propositions as conditionals may be a mistake […] Most of the maximal propositions he presents are given as predicative rather than as conditionals" (Stump, *Boethius*, p. 97a).

68 For Nifo, a topic cannot be a disjunction nor the negation of a conjunction. Accordingly, unlike Alexander, Nifo could not integrate the third, fourth and fifth Stoic indemonstrables in the Peripatetic hypothetical syllogistic.

69 Niphus, *Topica*, f. 39va; Nifo refers to Aegidius Romanus (Colonna). *Commentaria in Rhetoricam Aristotelis*, Frankfurt a.M, Minerva, 1968 (reprint of the edition Venice 1515), f. 12rb-12vb. In the section of the *Dialectica Ludicra* dealing with molecular propositions, Nifo defines conditionals similarly to material conditionals that is as compound propositions in which if the antecedent is true, necessarily the consequent is true too: "Uno assumpto uti vero, aliud necessario uti verum sequitur" (Niphus. *Dialectica*, f. 76va, see also f. 77ra). It should be noted that Nifo's qualification of a *locus* as *verus* seems to be at odds with his denial of truth-values to conditional propositions stated in the *Dialectica*. Here, Nifo claims that conditional propositions cannot be said to be true or false, since truth and falsity concern the predication *de inesse* but "conditio non ponit inesse". Moreover, a proposition is true if it signifies things as they are, but conditionals do not assert that things are in a certain way. On Nifo's theory of truth and meaning and its departure from medieval accounts see Ashworth, "Agostino Nifo".

Logical Matter and Logical Form

Logical Matter: The Topic-Principle

For Nifo, the topic-principles (*regulae topicae*) are logical rules (*regulae dialecticae*) just like the formal rules listed by Aristotle in the *Prior Analytics* (*regulae prioristicae*). Yet topic-principles substantially differ from the rules of conversion, syllogisms and consequences expounded in the *Prior Analytics*. This clearly emerges in many passages of Nifo's commentary on the *Topics*, particularly when he copes with counter-instances to the topics analysed. Let us take the example of the topic of the genus in which Aristotle prescribes to look at the contradictories of the terms involved in the question by transposing their sequence order. The topic is exemplified by the inference: if pleasant is good, then non-good is non-pleasant; for were this not the case, says Aristotle, then non-good would be pleasant, and so what is pleasant would be both good and non-good, which is impossible[70].

In commenting on this inference, Nifo notes that the Stagirite seems to have proven the topic through the formal rule (*regula prioristica*) of contraposition, which he formulates as the logical incompatibility between the premise and the contradictory of the conclusion of a valid inference. But if Aristotle had really used that formal rule, he would have argued incorrectly because the contradictory of the conclusion is not 'non-good is pleasant' but 'non-good isn't non-pleasant'[71].

Nifo solves the puzzle by supposing that Aristotle did not mean to prove the topic using a formal rule, but rather resorting to the topic-principle according to which if something falls under a species — viz pleasant —, it must fall under its genus too — viz good. Given this, if the inference: if pleasant is good, then non-good is pleasant, was valid, then something non-good would be pleasant; and since pleasant is a species of good, it would follow that something non-good would be good, which is impossible:

> Quod autem sequitur: si delectabile bonum est, e converso non bonum non delectabile, <Aristoteles> assignat causam prioristicam ex opposito consequentis. Nam si non sequitur, consequentis oppositum stabit cum antecedente et ita non bonum erit delectabile; hoc enim est oppositum consequentis, quod falsum est [...] Sed occurres quoniam non videtur propositio illa: non bonum est delectabile, oppositum consequentis. Haec enim non contradicunt: non bonum est non delectabile, et: non bonum est delectabile; ambae enim affirmativae sunt [...] *fortasse Aristoteles non probavit locum per regulam prioristicam*, quae est per oppositum consequentis, *sed per regulam Topicam*, quae est quia nihil est sub genere, quod non est sub aliqua specie. Quare si non bonum erit delectabile, oportet ut aliqua species non boni sit delectabile, quod est impossibile quoniam tunc aliquod non bonum esse bonum: quia quod est sub specie, oportet esse sub genere[72].

---

70 *Topics*, IV 4, 124b8-12.

71 If we take pairs of contradictories defined syntactically and not semantically.

72 Niphus. *Topica*, f. 113va-vb; for other examples, cf. Niphus. *Topica*, f. 47va.

Topical rules and *prioristicae* rules differ in their logical statuses and in how they are proved. The *regulae prioristicae* are formal rules of inference which are proved through proof by contradiction, whilst the hundreds of topic-principles (α) listed by Aristotle in the *Topics* are rather semantic principles of inference proved inductively, most of which have counterinstances[73]. Indeed, some topical rules are necessary while others are merely probable/endoxal, depending on the type of semantic relation they capture. In necessary topic-principles (α), the relation between the extreme terms of the antecedent and consequent is necessary or, put otherwise, the predicate-term is necessarily predicated of the subject-term. These necessary topic-principles are proved by perfect induction, which means that all α's instances (β) are true. In probable topic-principles (α), instead, the relation between the extremes of the antecedent and consequent is contingent: the predicate-terms inhere in the subject-terms "pro pluribus, ut Alexander inquit". Tellingly, Nifo expressly connects this semantic-protofrequentis description of probability to the exegesis of Alexander rather than to those of scholastic authors such as Albert the Great, who endorsed a suchlike understanding of probability[74]. It is this contingent mode of inherence of the predicate-term in the subject-term that accounts for the fact that probable topic-principles (α) hold true just in the most part of cases (*ut in pluribus*). And the instances (β) of α which constitute counterexamples determine under what circumstances α holds[75]. Since topic-principles are conditional propositions, by introducing probable topics-principles, which can be true and can be false, Nifo admits contingent conditionals. In doing so, he breaks with the traditional view about the logical status of conditionals that goes back to Peter of Spain, according to which true conditionals are necessary and false conditionals are impossible[76].

An example of a probable topic, which was debated upon by scholastic commentators of the *Topics*, is the topic "from the addition of one thing to another" according to which "if the addition of one thing to another makes that other good or white, whereas formerly it was not white or good, then the thing added will

---

73 "Dupliciter regulae dialecticae demonstrari solent, aut syllogismo contradictionis, aut inductione; topicus quidem inductione suas regulas demonstrat, analyticus vero syllogismo contradictionis" (Niphus. *Topica*, 2, f. 61va; cf. also f. 60rb).

74 Albertus. *Topica*, 1.3.2, p. 241b. The semantic interpretation of probability is also found in commentaries on the *Topics* written by Modist authors such as Simon of Faversham, Boethius of Dacia and Radulphus Brito, as well as by Angelo de Camerino, and by some fifteenth-century commentators such as Radulphus Boisel and Peter de Rivo.

75 Counterinstances were proposed by commentators as well as by Aristotle himself in the text: "Quando enim instantias Aristoteles non solvit, vult intelligere eas esse exceptiones a loco" (Niphus. *Topica*, f. 83rb; see also f. 83va). Following Alexander, Nifo specifies that counterinstances are exceptions to the propositional topic rather than to the whole topical problem, which is instead destroyed through dialectical arguments, cf. Niphus. *Topica*, f. 43rb.

76 Niphus, *Topica*, f. 215va. For Peter of Spain see Petrus Hispanus. *Tractatus, Called afterwards Summulae Logicales*, ed. L. M. De Rijk, Assen, Van Gorcum, 1972, tr. 1, §17, p. 9,15-19. On this rupture see J. Ashworth, *Language and Logic in the Post-Medieval Period*, Dordrecht-Boston, Reidel, 1974, p. 148-149.

be white or good — it will possess the character it imparts to the whole as well". Adenolphus, the Anonymous commentator and the *Iuniores* pointed out that this rule does not seem to be universally applicable. Consider a wall painted white: it is white in virtue of whiteness, yet whiteness is not itself white. And in order to save the necessity of this *locus*, these three authors proposed various solutions, none of which convinced Nifo:

> Plurimae aliae defensiones possunt fingi, nos tamen sequentes Alexandrum superius, diceremus hunc locum esse probabilem, non autem verum in omnibus: dialectici enim loci non omnes sunt necessarii et veri in omnibus, sed satis est ut sint probabiles et veri ut in pluribus, cum demonstrationes topicae non sunt ex veris et necessariis sed ex probabilibus[77].

The passage just mentioned is remarkable since it bridges the semantic-protofrequentist notion of probability and the Aristotelian endoxal understanding of probability. A syllogism qualifies as dialectical not only when its conclusion is a logical consequence of the premises, but mainly when it is a rationally persuasive argument. For the dialectician's goal is to rationally persuade the interlocutor, to "inducere opinionem, ac fidem facere, sive probare"[78]. And in order to produce rational persuasiveness, he should employ *argumentationes probabiles et persuasivae*, which are characterised by having premises that are *probabilia* (ἔνδοξα)[79].

In a dialectical discussion, in fact, the dialectician's interlocutor will more readily accept and grant endoxal/probable premises when these are put forward since probable premises are readily trustworthy. And they are readily trustworthy insofar as they appear to be true in all cases or at least most frequently[80]. Echoing Alexander's words, Nifo remarks that non-endoxal and endoxal premises do not

---

77 Niphus. *Topica*, lib. 2, f. 68vb; for probable topics see also f. 67rb, 69ra-rb, 70rb, 70vb; lib. 3, f. 77va, 85ra, 93vb; lib. 4, f. 114va-vb, 115rb-va, 126va-vb: "Hic est ultimus locus ad construendum genus, qui non est necessarium sed probabilis […] Quia dixit locum esse probabilem, et non universaliter verum, dat instantiam et non solvit, ut demonstret locum esse probabilem et non in omnibus verum, ut Alexander exposuit", lib. 5, f. 135ra.

78 Niphus. *Topica*, f. 9vb.

79 In the first chapter of the *Topics*, Aristotle claims that the starting point of dialectical syllogisms are the *éndoxa*, namely opinions "universally or widely accepted and shared" which at first sight were more believable than the conclusion (Aristoteles. *Topica*, 1.1 100a19-24; cf. also 1.10, 104a13-15). In the *Topics*, Aristotle employs the term *ἔνδοξον* both in relation to people and, mainly, propositions. For him, the endoxality of propositions is extrinsically bestowed on propositions on the basis of their being believed or approved by any group, either by the totality or the majority of people, or by a minority of experts. Relying on someone judging, and on his beliefs about the fact, the Aristotelian notion of probability could not have any mathematical overtone. Thus, from the Aristotelian perspective probability or endoxality is a qualitative notion. For a clear overview of the various understanding of the complex notion of probability in the Middle Ages and Renaissance see R. Schuessler, "Probability in Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy", in *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* Winter 2016 Edition, URL = https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/probability-medieval-renaissance/. for Nifo's endoxical understanding of probability see Spranzi, *The Art*, p. 114-119.

80 Niphus. *Topica*, f. 4vb, Alexander. *Topica*, 91,10-17.

differ with respect to their truth-value, since probable premises *qua probabilia* can indifferently be true or false, as Aristotle himself says. Their difference is mostly pragmatic since the endoxality of a premise depends on the hearer's judgment: "with what is approved, the judging is not based on facts but on the audience and on their suppositions about the facts"[81]. Endoxal premises (β), in their turn, derive their endoxality from the topic-principles (α) which, being propositions that seem intuitively true, are trustworthy in themselves.

Logical Form: The Dialectical Hypothetical Syllogism

We shall now attempt to gather together all the scattered pieces of the puzzle and complete the picture by delineating the dialectical argument according to Nifo (and Nifo's Alexander). As both commentators claim, dialectic is a syllogistic method and a dialectical argument is a syllogism or a chain of syllogisms[82], which is produced starting from the topics. In a dialectical exchange, a questioner and an answerer argue about a proposed question.

The dialectical question is expressed, in standard form, as a disjunction made up of contradictory parts, one of which is endorsed and defended by the answerer. The questioner's task is to refute his interlocutor by deducing a proposition contradicting the thesis defended by the answerer, who in his turn should avoid committing himself to a contradiction. As we have seen, the topics themselves are not arguments or syllogisms but are their "elementa et principia et occasiones", as Alexander and Nifo say. By resorting to the topics, in fact, the questioner can produce propositions to put forwards to the respondent. When these propositions are granted by the respondent, the questioner has the premises for making up a syllogism deducing the wanted conclusion, which is therefore known to both interlocutors beforehand.

Let us consider the case in which the question discussed is whether white dilates sight or not and the answerer defends the thesis that white does not dilate sight.

The questioner, then, seeks to establish that "white dilates sight" (Δ). In order to deduce the conclusion (Δ) through a dialectical syllogism, he should consider the terms appearing in Δ, their meanings and properties, their semantic or logical relations and, more generally, the inferential relations that these words may enter into. This scrutiny is aimed at identifying a property (e.g. contrariety) and an inferential connection among Δ's categorematic terms and other terms (e.g. white-black and

---

81 Alexander. *Topica*, 19, 17-27 (Engl. tr. p. 22); Niphus. *Topica*, f. 4ra. Nifo expands upon Alexander's words by providing a gnoseological foundation to the Aristotelian hierarchy of *éndoxa*, according to which the different types of *probabilia* reflect the diverse sources of human knowledge (sensible and intellectual): see Niphus, *Topica*, f. 4vb. A full explanation of Nifo's gnoseological account of *éndoxa* would require an explanation in the light of Nifo's psychology and epistemology, which falls beyond the scope of the present paper. Although variously expressed, the epistemological understanding of the *éndoxa* characterizes the great majority of medieval commentaries on the *Topics*.

82 Similarly to Alexander, Nifo uses the term "syllogism" for referring to both the token-argument and the mental inference, namely the act of passing from the set of premises to the conclusion.

dilation-contraction), both of which will be used to make up the premises. Knowledge of the topics facilitates the scrutiny, since the various topics capture and express different types of semantic and logical relations[83]. Accordingly, by putting together the chosen topic-principle (α) and Δ's constituent terms, the questioner obtains the premise (β_3) for arriving at Δ.

The propositional-topic (α_1), "If the contrary ($\sim P$) belongs to the contrary ($\sim s$), then the contrary (P) belongs to the contrary (s) too", is a good candidate for our case. From it, the questioner can derive β_3, "if black contracts sight, white dilates sight", and make up the hypothetical dialectical syllogism compounded of: 1) the major premise (*hypothesis* or *transumptio* or *concessum*), which is a conditional proposition, namely β_3; 2) the minor premise (*positio*): it is a subject-predicate proposition, which is not directly connected to the main conclusion (Δ) and which either a) affirms the antecedent of β_3 or b) denies β_3's consequent; 3) the main conclusion (Δ), which is a subject-predicate proposition that either a) affirms the consequent of β_3 or b) denies β_3's antecedent:

> Est maxima sive propositio contracta (β) ad speciem aliquam earum quae continebantur potentia in maxima (α). In illa enim universali (α_1): si contrarium contrario inest, et contrario inerit, multae continentur propositiones, quarum una est (β_3): si nigrum color est visus congregativus, album erit color visus disgregativus. Haec igitur contracta ad speciem contrariorum, videlicet albi et nigri, dicitur maxima contracta (β). Et haec est propositio, quae est pars syllogismi dialectici, unde ex hac dialecticus syllogismus fit hypotheticus a constructione antecedentis, videlicet: (β_3) si nigrum est color congregativus visus, album erit color disgregativus visus, sed nigrum est color congregativus visus, igitur album est color disgregativus visus[84].

Here emerges a major difference between the Latin tradition of the *Topics,* and the Greek tradition, which Nifo follows.

At the beginning of the *Topics*, Aristotle describes deductions in general and the *dialectical deduction* (*συλλογισμὸς*, *syllogismus*) in particular. Here, he seems to have in mind categorical syllogisms. Theophrastus understands the dialectical deduction as a hypothetical syllogism, whilst Alexander seems to conceive of it as the Aristotelian syllogism from a hypothesis, especially when he reports the Theophrastean view at

---

83 Augustinus Niphus. *Super Libros Priorum Aristotelis*, Venetiis, apud Hieronymum Scotum, 1569, f. 83rb: "Nos bifariam posse per transumptum syllogizare, aut propter eandem qualitatem in subiectis aut propter particularem inspectionem antecedentium, consequentium et alienorum praedicati et subiecti eius hypothesis, quae transumptio dicitur […] verbi causa: *divitiae non sunt bonae*. Transumptum vero est: *sanitas videtur magis bonum quam divitiae*. Subiecta ergo, quorum qualitas consideratur, sunt divitiae, et sanitas. Est autem qualitas habitudo localis, qua mediante ligantur illa subiecta, ut è transumpto ad principale problema licet procedere, ut locus a maiori ad minus, ubi destructive procedimus, locus a minori ad maius, ubi constructive, locus a simili, ubi utroque modo argumentamur. Locus e [et ed.] causa ad effectum. Locus a contrariis et caeteris id genus, de quibus in *Topicis* dictum est. Quare habitudo localis, vi cuius procedimus, e subiecto transumpti ad subiectum problematis, respectu alterius, atque alterius praedicati, qualitas in subiectis dicitur".

84 Niphus. *Topica*, f. 38rb-38va.

the beginning of Book II of the *Topics*[85]. Many medieval authors thought of dialectical syllogism as a categorical syllogism, and consequently they could hardly assign an active role to the topics in dialectical syllogisms[86].

Departing from his Latin predecessors, Nifo aligns himself with Alexander and finds a place for the topics in syllogisms from a hypothesis. Yet, he departs from Alexander, who admitted categorical as well as hypothetical syllogisms, insofar as for Nifo dialectical syllogisms appear to be exclusively hypothetical deductions.

Nifo acknowledges four kinds of syllogism from a hypothesis, which he labels *syllogismus ex hypothesi* or *ex suppositione vel concessione*, namely the syllogisms *conversivus*, *per impossibile*, *circularis*, *per transumptum*. Our analysis will focus on the latter since it is the only syllogism from a hypothesis which is connected to the topics[87].

All syllogisms from a hypothesis share the same structure (modus ponendo ponens or modus tollendo tollens) as the hypothetical syllogism analysed above

---

85 Aristotle does not offer a systematic treatment of the syllogism from a hypothesis, with which he deals in the *An. Pr.* I 23, 29, 44 and which he mentions in *Top.* I 18 and III 6, 119b35-120a2. Scholars have tried to shed light on its nature and functioning: G. Striker "Aristoteles über Syllogismen 'aufgrund einer Hypothese'", *Hermes* 107 (1979), p. 33-50, and her commentary on the aforementioned chapters in Aristotle, *Prior Analytics: Book I*, ed. G. Striker, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009; Słomkowski, *Aristotle*; P. Crivelli, "*Aristotle on syllogisms* from a 'hypothesis'", in A. Longo-D. Del Forno (eds), *Argument from Hypothesis in Ancient Philosophy*, Napoli, Bibliopolis, 2011, p. 95-184. On Alexander's syllogisms from a hypothesis, see S. Bobzien, "Alexander of Aphrodisias on Aristotle's Theory of the Stoic indemonstrables", in M. Lee (ed.), *Strategies of Argument: Essays in Ancient Ethics, Epistemology, and Logic*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 199-227.

86 Some medieval commentators, such as Adenulphus, Albert the Great, the Oxford-Robert as well as Gilles of Rome in his commentary on the *Rhetoric*, propose as a solution to this problem the doctrine of the double form of dialectical syllogism whereby the dialectical syllogism adds the topical or dialectical form to the form of the simple syllogism. Nifo explicitly rejects the idea that the dialectical syllogism "addit aliquid supra formam syllogismi in eo quod inferens, videlicet habitudinem localem" (Niphus. *Topica*, f. 7va). Not infrequently, medieval authors do not consider hypothetical syllogisms as syllogisms at all, like Robert Kilwardby, who "excludes hypothetical syllogisms as not being covered by Aristotle's definition" of syllogism (P. Thom, *Logic and Ontology in the Syllogistic of Robert Kilwardby*, Leiden, Brill, 2007 p. 49), whilst John Buridan considered it to be a syllogism. For the doctrine of the double form, especially in Albert the Great, see Brumberg-Chaumont, "Les divisions"; for Nifo's dialectical syllogism see E.J. Ashworth, "Le syllogisme topique au XVI^{e} siècle: Nifo, Melanchthon et Fonseca", in J. Biard-F. Mariani Zini (eds), *Les lieux de l'argumentation. Histoire du syllogisme topique d'Aristote à Leibniz*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2009, p. 408-430, who however takes into account only the description given by Nifo in the first book, which is a categorical syllogism.

87 The fourfold taxonomy of the *syllogismus ex hypothesi* is found in Niphus. *Topica*, f. 37ra, commenting on *Top.* I 18 108b12, but it is not present in Alexander. *Topica*, p. 122-123. Moreover, this classification does not find any precise parallel in the various passages of Nifo's commentary on the *Prior Analytics*, where Nifo provides different subdivisions of syllogisms from a hypothesis and none of these overlaps with the others. We cannot deal here with Nifo's doctrine of hypothetical syllogisms in detail, since this would require a length analysis of his commentary on the *Prior Analytics*, which should consider: Nifo's inconsistent view on the issue and how he assigns a fully-fledged theory of hypothetical syllogisms to Aristotle relying on the exegesis of Philoponus and Alexander. For the *syllogismus conversivus* see Niphus. *Priorum*, f. 83rb (commenting on *An.Pr.* I 29, 45b19 f.), where, however, Nifo considers syllogisms deducing "propter conversionem alterius propositionis in syllogismo principali" as a subclass of syllogisms *per transumptum*; for syllogisms through the impossible, whose hypothesis is the logical Rule of Contradictory Pairs, see *ibid.* f. 67va-68ra, 96ra-vb; for the *syllogismus circularis* see f. 116rb.

and are complex arguments compounded from two inferential processes, namely an ostensive syllogism and a non-syllogistic inference[88]. The minor premise (*positio*) of the syllogism from a hypothesis is the conclusion of the ostensive syllogism[89]. Whilst the main conclusion (Δ) of syllogisms from a hypothesis is inferred through a non-syllogistic inference on the basis of the obtained minor premise and of the major premise or *hypothesis*. But when is someone allowed to use such arguments? For Nifo, one should resort to hypothetical syllogism every time there are no middle terms available for producing a categorical syllogism[90]. Syllogisms from a hypothesis *per transumptum* are wholly grounded on topics and their hypotheses are granted by the interlocutor "virtute loci dialectici, et propter aliquam maximam ex loco constitutam, ut puta, aut ex simili aut a maiori, aut a minori, aut a contrario aut alio modo"[91].

As we have seen, major premises (β) are endoxal propositions whose trustworthiness and acceptability directly derive from the topic-principles (α). Moreover, in syllogisms *per transumptum* the main conclusion (Δ) is inferred through the hypothesis or major premise (β). And β is an instantiation of α, from which therefore β derives its inferential force. Therefore, in the end the real warrant of the hypothetical inference is α, which supports the inferential process from outside. Consequently, α functions as a semantic or logical inferential rule which justifies the inferential move from the conclusion of the ostensive syllogism, namely the minor premise of the syllogism *per transumptum*, to Δ. Accordingly, Nifo assigns both a heuristic and a structural function to the topics in syllogisms *ex transumpto*, which are semantically based inferences:

> Necessitas syllogismi categorici est per dici de omni vel dici de nullo. Necessitas vero syllogismi hypothetici est per aliquam habitudinem localem et aliquando per naturam oppositionis. Et concludit propositum vel a positione antecedentis

88 Niphus. *Priorum*, f. 68ra.

89 Accordingly, also syllogisms from a hypothesis can be resolved into the figures of categorical syllogisms, although the reduction concerns only a part and not the whole syllogism from a hypothesis.

90 Niphus. *Priorum*, f. 83rb: "Est enim transumptio hypothesis, quoniam ea concessa infertur principale problema. Ex his sequitur causa quare inventa fuit transumptio. Nam cum ad principale problema caremus mediis, utimur transumptione. Sequitur etiam syllogismum per transumptum et syllogismum transumpti, vel de transumpto, non esse idem nam hic processus, quo probamus propositionem, syllogismus transumpti vel de transumpto est, secundus vero processus, in quo utimur hypothesi, qua aut concessa ab adversario aut syllogizata, principale problema, deducimus, syllogismus per transumptum dicitur".

91 *Ibid.*, f. 96va, where Nifo comments on Aristotle's claim that the hypothesis is granted *ad placitum* specifying that *ad placitum* does not mean arbitrarily or without plausible reasons: "omnino absque ratione, quoniam <hypothesis> conceditur aut virtute oppositionis, ut in syllogismis per impossibile, aut virtute loci dialectici et propter aliquam maximam ex loco constitutam, ut puta ex simili, aut a maiori, aut a minori, aut a contrario, aut alio modo, sed haec dicuntur concessa ad placitum quia non vi syllogismorum". This, however, contrasts with Nifo's words at f. 83rb (see previous footnote), where he states that in syllogisms *ex transumpto* the hypothesis is granted by the interlocutor "aut motu proprio, aut vi syllogismi".

> vel a destructione antecedentis. Tunc dicunt quod syllogismus ex hypothesi non potest resolvi in syllogismum categoricum sed bene in hypotheticum[92].

As plainly emerges from these words, Nifo confers a crucial role to the topics in syllogisms from a hypothesis *ex transumpto*, whose necessity he affirms to be grounded on the various topical relations, just as the necessity of ostensive or categorical syllogism is based on the principle of dici de omni et nullo.

In his discussion of syllogisms from a hypothesis, Nifo often departs from Alexander. This mainly happens when Alexander's exegesis introduces elements of Stoic logic into Aristotle's text for appropriating and subsuming the Stoic indemonstrables under Peripatetic logic. An integration which Nifo wholly rejects.

Crossing Traditions: Nifo, the Greek and Latin Traditions of the Topics and the Consequences

Having come all this way, we may finally wonder if and how Nifo sees the Theophrastean-Aphrodisian tradition of the topics as related to its Cicero-Boethian counterpart. Nifo was aware that the newly recovered Theophrastean-Aphrodisian notion of *tópos* as topic-principle seemed to depart, at least *prima facie*, from the long-standing Cicero-Boethian tradition of *locus*. He indeed faces this problem directly[93] and elaborates upon a Solomonic solution that bridges the gap between the two alternatives. On the one hand, he says, the term *locus* refers to the general and undefined propositional-topic (α) called *tópos* by Theophrastus, *locus praeceptus* by Alexander, *maxima* both by Medievals and at times by Nifo himself, who also labels it *locus propositio*. On the other hand, Nifo recognizes that the term *locus* denotes the Theophrastean instructional topic (*paraggelma*) or strategy, which Nifo dubs *locus praeceptivus*. Relying on Alexander's account, Nifo describes instructional-topics as unifying categories under which are gathered the topic-principles. Thus, the instructional-topic is that from which one or more propositional-topics (α) are taken: it permits one to discover the more suited *loci praecepti* for the issue at stake. And in its turn, the *locus praeceptus* plays a heuristic function with regards to the *propositio contracta* (β). In this chain, the *locus praeceptivus* is the principle of the *locus praeceptus* (α), which in turn is the principle of the *propositio contracta* (β) which is the principle of the dialectical syllogism, namely its major premise. Nifo

92 Niphus. *Priora*, commenting on I 44, 50a, f. 97ra. Cf. also "Syllogismus ostensivus sive categoricus: necessitas eius est per dici de omni et de nullo, syllogismus hypotheticus: necessitas eius est per *aliquam* localem habitudinem" (*ibid.*, f. 68ra). Whilst Nifo grounds hypothetical syllogisms on topical relations in general, Boethius specifically binds hypothetical syllogisms to the *locus* from conditionals.

93 After having reported Alexander's and Theophrastus' view on the propositional topic, Nifo doubted, since "ut dicitur primo Rhetoricorum, locus est terminus [...] et definitur a M. Tullio locus, quod sit sedes argumenti. At sedes terminus est a quo propositio constat [...] Igitur locus est terminus, in qua [*sic*] sedet maxima" (Niphus, *Topica*, f. 38rb).

adds an interesting lexicographical remark in order to remove any terminological and conceptual ambiguity about the topics:

> Alexander vero, quod Theophrastus vocat praeceptum, locum praeceptivum appellat, nos vero vocavimus locum terminum. Dicitur enim locus preaceptivus, quoniam per ipsum praecipitur ad quid sit respiciendum pro inventione propositionis maximae. Dicitur autem locus terminus, quoniam est quid communius, simplicius et universalius, a quo accipitur locus maxima. Est enim principium loci maximae, quatenus ex ipso maxima accipitur[94].

These words on the instructional-topic reminds us of the Cicero-Boethian definition of *locus* as the *sedes argumenti* and specifically Boethius' idea that the *locus differentia* contains the *maximae* or is that from which many *maximae* can be derived, just as the *maximae* contain the premises of syllogisms[95]. Thus, Nifo seems to implicitly harmonize the two traditions, especially with regard to the containment-relation between the *loci* and the premises of dialectical syllogisms. Nifo's explanation of Theophrastus' instructional *tópoi* (*paraggelmata*) and, more generally, his reflections on the *locus praeceptivus* tend to link more than divorce it from the Cicero-Boethian *differentia*. Probably, Nifo would subscribe to the contemporary view that Theophrastus' investigational-instruction is "the ancestor of Boethius' Differentiae"[96].

Despite the acknowledged agreement, there clearly remain some unbridgeable substantial differences between the Greek and Latin traditions. The most apparent divergence concerns the number and ordering of the Greek *loci praeceptivi* and the Latin *differentiae*. The *loci differentiae* indeed are few in number, are all classified, either according to Cicero's or to Themistius' list[97], and are subdivided in intrinsic, extrinsic and middle *loci*. Nifo's *loci praeceptivi* do not exhibit any of these features. The hundreds of investigational-instructions listed in the *Topics* are arranged according to the Aristotelian four predicables, namely accident, genus, proprium and definition, which by contrast did not play any role in the Cicero-Boethian tradition. Moreover,

---

94 Niphus. *Topica*, f. 40ra-rb; see f. 38ra-rb for the *locus maxima*. If we consider the first topic given by Aristotle, *Topics*, II 2, 109a34-b13, the *locus praeceptivus* or *terminus* is "inspicere si quod quispiam assignavit, ut accidens, secundum aliquem alium modum insit". Although Aristotle did not express it explicitly, according to Nifo the *locus praeceptus* or *maxima* (α) is "si aliquod propositum inest alicui secundum aliquem modum aliorum praedicatorum, tale propositum non est accidens" (*ibid.*, f. 40ra-rb).

95 Boethius. *DTD*, lib. 2, 1185D-1186A: "Universales et maximae propositiones loci sunt dictae, quoniam ipsae sunt quae *continent* caeteras propositiones, et per eas fit consequens et rata conclusio. An sicut locus in se corporis continent quantitatem, ita hae propositiones quae sunt maximae intra se omnem vim posteriorum atque ipsius conclusionis consequentiam tenent, et uno quidem modo locus, id est argumenti sedes dicitur maxima, principalisque propositio fidem caeteris subministrans. Alio vero modo loci vocantur maximarum differentiae propositionum […] si ipsae propositiones maximae argumentorum loci sunt, et differentias earum argumentorum locos esse necesse est".

96 Stump, *Boethius*, p. 211; on the same line Green-Pedersen, *The Tradition*, p. 68-70; Ebbesen, "The Theory".

97 Plausibly, Nifo knew the Themistian list, and more generally, Themistius' notion of *topos* according to which the topic itself can appear in dialectical syllogisms. Nifo could know this not only via Boethius and medieval commentators, but also via Averroes' description of Themistius' view in his Middle Commentary on the *Topics*.

whilst the Boethian *loci differentiae* were normally considered tools for identifying the middle term of dialectical syllogisms, Nifo's *locus praeceptivus* serves for finding the topic-principle (α) and mediately, the major premises (β) of syllogisms. Furthermore, for Nifo the topic-principle (α) supports the dialectical syllogism from outside exclusively, whereas Boethius allowed their internal support by assuming that the topic-principle (α) can be the major premise of dialectical syllogisms.

I wish to make a final observation on the *vexata quaestio* concerning the often unclear, especially in the Middle Ages, relation between topics and consequences. Nifo's allegiance to the Greek logical tradition and specifically to the Theophrastean-Aphrodisian doctrine of the topics allows him to make a hard and fast distinction between topics and consequences, which does not permit any overlapping between nor mapping of the topics into the various types of consequences[98]. Although topics and consequences are equiform, they differ in nature. Indeed the topics are semantic rules used by the dialectician, whereas the consequences are valid inference forms dealt with by the pure logician. And since *operatio sequitur esse*, this difference in nature entangles a difference in function. The topics indeed are *principia* of dialectical syllogisms, that is they are the semantic inference-rule according to which dialectical syllogisms work, whilst the consequences are valid inference-schemes, but not regulatory principles; on the contrary, they are in their turn ruled by the principle "ex opposito consequentis sequitur oppositum antecedentis". Moreover, the topics are *elementa*, components of hypothetical syllogisms, whilst the consequences are considered by Nifo a kind of induction, which can and should be resolved into categorical syllogisms[99].

Conclusions

In the Middle Ages, the Latin tradition of the topics had prevailed unrivalled. We can surely give credit to Agostino Nifo for having awakened the Greek tradition of the topics — which is almost exclusively represented by Alexander of Aphrodisias' commentary on the Aristotelian text — and for having brought this tradition back onto the philosophical scene following almost one thousand three hundred years of absence.

In his commentary on the *Topics*, Nifo often presents his readers with both the Latin and Greek commentary traditions. Despite his general distaste for the exegeses on the *Topics* produced in Western medieval Universities, at times Nifo agrees with the expositions of his Latin predecessors. Yet generally, Nifo closely

98 Nifo divides consequences into formally valid/*simpliciter* on the one side, and *simpliciter* and *ut nunc* materially valid/*per se* on the other side.

99 "Iuniores addunt inter rationes [*scil.* the four types of arguments] eam, quam consequentia vocant, igitur non tantum duae sunt dialecticae rationes. Alexander reducit enthymema ad syllogismum, exemplum ad inductionem, et nos consequentiam reducere possumus ad inductionem: rationem esse necessariam non syllogisticam, ad syllogisticam» (Niphus. *Topica*, f. 26rb). On Nifo's doctrine of consequences see Niphus. *Priora*, f. 11ra-13va; Niphus. *Dialectica*, f. 109ra-118vb; Ashworth, "Agostino Nifo".

follows Alexander's position in reading the *Topics*. Nevertheless, Nifo's allegiance to Alexander is not slavish, and does not prevent him from proposing some autonomous exegeses of Aristotle's text nor from openly expressing his dissent and from rejecting some doctrinal innovation introduced by Alexander into Aristotle's text. The most relevant example of that is Nifo's refusal to subsume the Stoic syllogistic under the Aristotelian syllogisms from a hypothesis and the Aristotelian doctrine of the topics. For Nifo, indeed, the Aristotelian syllogistic and the doctrine of the topics pertain to term logic. Accordingly, in dealing with the topics Nifo did not succumb to the temptation to consider term logic and propositional logic "not as rivals but as collaborators"[100], unlike many of his medieval predecessors.

Nifo's preference for the Greek tradition allows him to provide a rather clear and coherent picture of the *locus*, a picture which was lacking in the writings of his medieval predecessors. And this new approach inevitably led Nifo to forge wholly new paths. Following Alexander's account of the topics, Nifo assigns them a heuristic and structural function within dialectical arguments. Topics, indeed, serve to identify the major premise of dialectical syllogisms, and are the semantic rules that back the inference from the premises to the conclusion.

Like Alexander, Nifo does not consider the Aristotelian *loci* listed in the *Topics* as lists of valid inference forms. At times, both Nifo and Alexander's Nifo exhibit an approach to the topics that bears resemblance to the contemporary "theory of argumentation". It would perhaps be fruitful to inspect how close these similarities are, yet "that may be the subject of a new story, but our present story is ended".

100 J. Barnes, "Terms and Sentences", in *Id.*, *Logical Matters: Essays in Ancient Philosophy II*, ed. M. Bonelli, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 434.

PIETRO DANIEL OMODEO

Presence/Absence of Alexander of Aphrodisias in Renaissance Cosmo-Psychology

Alexander of Aphrodisias is certainly not one of the main protagonists of the history of science. However, he made a timid appearance in the history of astronomy thanks to the recent re-assessment of a text long held to be apocryphal, the *Mabādi' al-kull*, a treatise "on the principles of all" that has come down to us through the Arabic tradition[1]. Despite this single foray, it is prudent to speak of his 'absence' in the history of science, which mirrors a silence in the Latin astronomical culture. Alexander's significance to the cosmology of the early modern period should be sought in the context of the complex Scholastic work of systematization of Aristotle's legacy, in the debates aimed at clarifying the links between the doctrines of *De coelo* and *De anima*, as well as in the disputes on the ontological and gnoseological premises of natural investigation. A re-examination of the question will perhaps allow us to identify a less evident presence, obscured by a merely apparent absence in the *longue durée* of the history of cosmology.

The researcher on the hunt for Alexander in Renaissance cosmological debates could seek a trace of him in the work of Pietro Pomponazzi, a professor in Padua and Bologna who enjoyed fame as an "Alexandrist" in the controversy over the active intellect. We will be tempted to turn to Pomponazzi's *De fato* (*c.* 1520, printed in 1556) in consideration of the title, echoing a famous work by the ancient philosopher. However, in this case, we must speak of a negative reception: while Alexander's Περὶ εἱμαρμένης is marked by a radical anti-Stoic contingentism, Pomponazzi is deployed

1 Alexander of Aphrodisias. *On the Cosmos*, ed. C. Genequand, Leiden, Brill, 2001. The Arabic title could be translated as: "Treatise of Alexander of Aphrodisias on the principles of the whole according to Aristotle, the philosopher". I thank Razieh Mousavi for the linguistic advice. The authorship of this treatise is controversial. Among those who cast it into doubt, one can mention D. Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, Boston, Brill, 2014, p. 245-248. See also S. Pines, "The Spiritual Force Permeating the Cosmos according to a Passage in the Treatise on the Principles of the All by Alexander of Aphrodisias and the Theory of Motion", in *Id.*, *Studies in Arabic Versions of Greek Texts and in Mediaeval Science*, Jerusalem-Leiden, Magnes Press-Brill, 1986, p. 252-255.

Pietro Daniel Omodeo • ERC *EarlyModernCosmology* (Horizon 2020, GA: 725883), Università Ca' Foscari, Venezia, pietrodaniel.omodeo@unive.it.

Alexander of Aphrodisias in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, ed. by Pietro B. Rossi, Matteo Di Giovanni, and Andrea A. Robiglio, Turnhout, 2021 (*Studia Artistarum*, 45), p. 173-191
© BREPOLS PUBLISHERS
10.1484/M.SA-EB.5.120542

on the opposite conceptual front. It is true that the Renaissance professor meticulously examines his ancient predecessor, but his aim is to refute him. In *De fato*, the treatment of cosmology is collateral, since the central themes — destiny, necessity, contingency, providence, free will — regard the epistemological and ontological premises of natural discourse and not science in the more conventional sense — its practices, its theory. It is also true that both in *De fato* and in *De incantationibus* (written around 1520 but printed posthumously in 1567), Pomponazzi postulated astral conditions for human activity[2]. Ernst Cassirer viewed the astral necessitarianism of *De fato* as an important source of modern natural immanentism, which he opposed to Pico's humanism with his stress on human dignity and freedom[3]. However, these positions are distant from Alexander, who had explicitly denied the Stoic equivalence of fate and natural order in Περὶ εἱμαρμένης. He had distinguished between the plane of universal laws and their worldly realization, the latter subjected to various degrees of necessity and contingency. I quote from Robert Sharples' translation:

> [...] and neither does each of the things that come to be in accordance with nature always come to be in accordance with the fixed time that seems to be laid down for the things that come to be in this way. If there is in the things that come to be in accordance with nature that too which is contrary to nature, as also in the things in accordance with craft, what is contrary to fate will also have a place in the things that come to be in accordance with fate, so that if what is contrary to nature has a place and is not an empty expression, what is contrary to fate too, will have a place in the things that come to be. And for this reason one might reasonably say, too, that it is proper of nature of each thing that is its beginning and cause of the ordered pattern of the things that come to be in it in accordance with nature[4].

---

2 See the remarks by Vittoria Perrone Compagni in "La fondazione 'scientifica' della magia nel *De incantationibus*", introduction to Petrus Pomponatius. *De incantationibus*, ed. V. Perroni Compagni Firenze, Olschki, 2011, p. xi-lxxii, xxiii: "The individual receives an attitude from the stars, which incline him to the exercise of this natural gift and make him the 'collaborator' of astral causality. This etiology of the magical fact is consistent with the structuring of the astrological causal chain [...] which Pomponazzi shares, taking it to extremes in *De fato*, where the disposition received from the stars is not viewed as a simple 'inclination', which acts on the sensitive part of the soul leaving intact the intellectual part, but as the nature of man in its totality".

3 Cf. E. Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance*, Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag, 2002 (first published 1927), p. 114-142, viz., Chapter 3 devoted to "Freiheit und Notwendigkeit".

4 alexander of aphrodisias. *On Fate*, ed. R. W. Sharples, London, Duckworth, 1983: p. 46-47. Cf. the early modern Latin edition Alexander Aphrodisiensis. *De fato et de eo quod nostrae potestatis est*, Londinum, Typis Thomae Roycroft, 1658, p. 26: "Unde et illud sequitur, quod eorum quae natura sunt, secundum legem aliquam praeviam, quae de iis determinate ferri videtur, unumquodque semper et constanter fiat. Cum vero inter ea quae natura fiunt, alia etiam praeter naturam fiant, et non omnia secundum naturam (eodem modo quo in Artis operibus fieri videmus) sequitur ut et inter ea quae Fato fiunt locum etiam habeant ea quae praeter Fatum fiunt. Adeo ut, si locum habeat id quod praeter naturam est, nec sit illud inane prorsus nomen, inter ea etiam quae fato fiunt, illi, quod est praeter Fatum, locus concedendus sit. Nec igitur a ratione alienum est si dicamus propriam cuiusque rei naturam, eius principium esse, causamque dispositionis omnium, quae ab ea secundum naturam fiunt". For an

Pomponazzi's positions on these topics are not unequivocal, oscillating between the strong Stoic necessitarianism of *De fato* and the admission of a possible distinction between universal (and providential) necessity and the particular concretization of the laws of nature in *De incantationibus*[5]. Here we can see the possibility of a convergence between the ontology of the ancient commentator and the sixteenth-century Aristotelian, but it is not on these topics that Alexander's direct and positive influence is most substantial.

The Alexander of Pomponazzi, if there is one, is that of the soul doctrines, even though we are dealing with a controversial reception. As far as we are concerned at present, it is sufficient to recall that the philosophical defence of the inseparability of the soul from the body — and thus the theory of the mortality of the soul — brings Pomponazzi closer to Alexander and opposes him both to Averroes and the "divine" Thomas. Nevertheless, the Renaissance philosopher — either to take precautions or by true adherence to the double-truth doctrine — made sure to distinguish between the natural theses he supported on the basis of (Aristotelian) reason alone and articles not subject to philosophical proof but held by faith[6]. It would be useless to reopen the debate on Pomponazzi's actual knowledge of the psychology of Alexander. I will take it for granted, in view of the importance of Alexandrist theses in Renaissance disputes on the immortality of the soul[7]. Hence, I would like to focus on another topic related to it but of greater relevance to the history of astronomy: the intertwining of psychology and cosmology within the well-known debate on the soul. In this way, the fundamental question of the presence/absence of Alexander in Renaissance astronomy will be shifted but at the same time enriched. I will move it in the direction of a clarification of the cosmological importance of theological disputes on the soul, in which the radical theses of the ancient commentator linger. If the importance of Renaissance cosmology in disputes on the soul are little known to historians of astronomy, even less known is the importance of such disputes in

---

insightful introduction to this work, see the introduction to the recent Italian edition by Carlo Natali in Alessandro d'Afrodisia, *Il Destino: Trattato sul destino e su ciò che dipende da noi, dedicato agli imperatori*, ed. C. Natali, Sankt Augustin, Academia Verlag, 2009, p. 11-98.

5 I refer the reader to the considerations of V. Perrone Compagni, "Introduzione: la fondazione 'scientifica' della magia nel *De incantationibus*", in Pomponatius. *De incantationibus*, p. xliv-xlv.

6 Alexander's most explicit rejection of the doctrine of the mortality of the soul is found in the first book of *De fato*, dedicated to refuting the Περὶ εἱμαρμένης of the ancient commentator. See Petrus Pomponatius. *Libri quinque de fato, de libero arbitrio et de praedestinatione*, ed. R. Lemay, Lugano, Thesaurus Mundi, 1957, p. 89: "Alexander enim, ut notum et famosum est de eo, voluit humanam animam esse mortalem. Verum sic adversus eum argumentabimur […]".

7 See the previous quotation from *De fato*. In this regard, see the observation by Perrone Compagni in her 'Introduzione' to Pietro Pomponazzi, *Trattato sull'immortalità dell'anima*, Firenze, Olschki, 1999, p. v-cii, p. xlii-xliii and lix-lxi. But see also the *Quaestiones de anima* linked to the Paduan teaching of 1504, discussed by P. O. Kristeller, "Two Unpublished Quaestions on the Soul by Pietro Pomponazzi", in *Medievalia et Humanistica*, 9 (1955), p. 81-82. Reference can also be made to the constant polemic of Agostino Nifo against Alexander in his *De intellectu* (1503), e.g. I, 5. Alexander is assimilated to the Epicureans, e.g. in II 2. See the recent edition Augustinus Niphus. *De intellectu*, ed. L. Spruit, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2011, p. 232: "Dicearcus, Empedocles, Lucretius, Aristoxenes, Epicurus ac Alexander et universaliter qui extinctionem intellectus coniurant, rationalem non tantum formam materiae ac virtutem corporis credunt esse, immo potestatem eius dicunt, nec corpus excedere, nec in eo elevari".

the developments of astronomy in the golden age of Nicolaus Copernicus, Galileo Galilei and Johannes Kepler, a topic to which I will return in my concluding remarks as a prospect of further research.

Intellect and the Separability of Celestial Intelligences: The Position of Agostino Nifo

I will take my starting point from Eugenio Garin's history of Italian philosophy, *Storia della filosofia italiana*. Referring to the polemical positions of Pomponazzi's main intellectual adversary, Garin observed that:

> According to Nifo, the intellect comprehends the universal and the universal is abstract, *separate*. The soul is similar to the idea, Plato would have said; hence, one cannot link it to matter. Pomponazzi himself admits — as Nifo observes — a separation of celestial intelligence from the spheres; thus, the intellect is a separate mover, not an informing form. [The historian of philosophy] Fiorentino lost patience in the face of this constant appeal to the stars; yet it was important. In Pomponazzi and in general in Aristotelianism, it was a concession to the separation of the intelligence from the body, and it was a serious concession because it weakened the theory of an act always linked to matter or potency, to accept an act in itself, that is, an act in act[8].

In his bitter reprimand of Pomponazzi, Nifo believed that he could derive from celestial ontology a lethal argument against the doctrine of inseparability of the soul from the body. In *De immortalitate animae* [On the immortality of the soul] (1518) he demonstrated the separability of the soul from the body, taking the celestial bodies as his reference point in Chapter 61 entitled "declaratur quomodo anima sit actus corporis" [It is declared in what manner the soul is the act of a body]:

> [...] let us now deal with Pomponazzi's arguments. Firstly, he argues in this way: the soul is an act of the body, thus it depends on the body to operate. Consequently, above all, his reasoning is not valid, since any soul of the heavens is an act of the heavens, although in thinking it does not depend on the heavens either as a subject or as an object[9].

---

8 E. Garin, *Storia della filosofia italiana*, vol. 2, Torino, Einaudi, 1966, p. 526-527: "Secondo il Nifo l'intelletto afferra l'universale e l'universale è astratto, *separato*. L'anima è simile all'idea avrebbe detto Platone; non si può dunque vincolarla alla materia. Pomponazzi stesso ammette — osserva il Nifo, una separazione dell'intelligenza celeste dalle sfere; l'intelletto dunque è motore separato, non forma informante. Il Fiorentino perdeva la pazienza di fronte a questo continuo appello agli astri; ma esso era importante: era nel Pomponazzi e in genere nell'aristotelismo, una concessione alla separazione dell'intelligenza rispetto al corpo, ed era concessione grave perché incrinava la teoria di un atto sempre legato a una materia o potenza, per ammettere un atto in sé, un atto in atto".

9 Cf. A. Nifo, *L'immortalità dell'anima: Contro Pomponazzi*, ed. M. G. Valverde, Milano, Nino Aragno Editore, 2009, p. 272, 274: "[...] nunc ad rationes Pomponatii accedamus. Argumentatur igitur primo: anima est actus corporis, ergo in operando dependet a corpore. Ubi patet primo eius argumentum non

The canonical reference for debates on celestial intelligences was Book XII of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. In fact, according to Scholastic interpretations of this book, the cause of the celestial motions was brought back to the action of intelligences, whose number was established on the basis of the number of spheres postulated by a revised 'homocentric' astronomy derived from Callippus and Eudoxus[10]. At least this is the solution that Arabic interpreters of Aristotle, in particular Avicenna and Averroes, had given to the question, raised in *Metaphysics* XII, of whether there are many separate intelligences or there is only one such separated being, the Unmoved Prime Mover, as Alexander most likely maintained. But this is an issue related to his reception in the Islamic context and not so much of the Renaissance reception mediated by that culture on which I presently deal[11]. In fact, the multiplicity of separate intelligences, adopted by Averroes, does not seem to be questioned by our sixteenth-century polemicists.

Cosmo-psychological considerations by Nifo can already be found in *De intellectu* (1503). They concern both the metaphorical plane and the argumentative one. In *De intellectu* II 22, the philosopher presents his point of view on the types of soul. He postulates three: Firstly, the form of the elements, which is inseparable from matter since the former cannot operate without the latter. Secondly, forms that go beyond the limits of matter, both regarding their being and the operation of the bodies they animate; these are the *animae animalium coelestium*. Thirdly, rational souls, facing a dual horizon of eternity and temporality; they are partly immersed in matter but are in part free of it[12].

Astronomy provides Nifo with a field of investigation of intellectual operations, and thus the understanding of the heavens is relevant to psychology in general. On a rhetorical plane, the planetary system also provides him with a useful analogy to represent the relationship of unity and multiplicity characterizing the connection of the intellectual faculties with the plurality of the functions of the soul:

> We can clarify this with an example, as is suitable to illustrate difficult issues. We can say that the rational soul is in its own genre, like the Sun in the genre of

---

valere, quandoquidem quaelibet caeli anima est actus caeli, quae tamen in intelligendo a caelo non dependet, nec ut a subiecto, nec ut a obiecto". The English translation is based on the Italian one by Francesco Paolo Raimondi, p. 273, 275.

10 There is controversy over whether Aristotle accepted the existence of material spheres or celestial orbs responsible for transporting the planets and the exact number of intellects he postulated. The material constitution of the celestial bodies according to Aristotle was recently discussed by T. Kouremenos, *Heavenly Stuff: The Constitution of the Celestial Objects and the Theory of Homocentric Spheres in Aristotle's Cosmology*, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, 2012. These questions animated the medieval and Renaissance cosmological debates, as discussed in detail by E. Grant, *Planets, Stars and Orbs: The Medieval Cosmos (1280-1687)*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, and M. A. Granada, *Sfere solide e cielo fluido: Momenti del dibattito cosmologico nella seconda metà del Cinquecento*, Milano, Guerini, 2002. The term 'homocentric' is historically posterior; it would be introduced by Girolamo Fracastoro in the sixteenth century.

11 Cf. D. Janos, "Moving the Orbs: Astronomy, Physics, and Metaphysics, and the Problem of Celestial Motion According to Ibn Sīnā", in *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 21 (2011), p. 165-214.

12 Niphus. *De intellectu*, p. 304-305.

> the body. In fact, we observe that the Sun is one and individual. Considered in relation to it itself, its inner light is its form, individual and one in number. As [the light] waves from [the Sun], it universally enlightens all transparent bodies, the permeable ones [*pervii*], which it renders lucid, as well as the colored ones. I mention this to point out that, even if it [the Sun] is one in number, it can enact and realize many effects. Considering that the intellect is like that, Aristotle says that it is like a light[13].

Nifo would also use the same metaphor of the active intellect as being like the Sun of the soul in his polemic with Pomponazzi[14]. This is a well-known theme of Renaissance philosophy and science which goes beyond the original Platonic inspiration[15]. The theme would also be taken up and revised in heliocentric terms by Nicolaus Copernicus in *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (1543)[16].

Averroist and Alexandrist Sources on Celestial Motions

The Averroes of *De substantia orbis* is also among the authors mentioned by Nifo:

> Hence, the instrument must be separated for the separate operation of any separated mover, as Averroes asserts in many places, e.g. in the commentary of the *Physica auscultatio* VIII 15 and in the second book of *De substantia orbis*. But according to him, the rational soul is an art and a separated mover [*motor*][17].

Psychology plays an important role in *De substantia orbis*, since the soul of the celestial bodies is presented as a separate mover. Averroes discussed the general structure of the cosmos in the commentary on *Metaphysics*, particularly in the reflections of the twelfth book. He argued for a homocentric view which he contrasts with the mathematical astronomy inherited from Ptolemy. Averroes prescribed a harmonic integration of physics and celestial mathematics. Mathematical astronomy

---

13 Niphus. *De intellectu*, p. 305: "Quod si declarabimus exemplo, quo uti debemus circa expositionem difficilium rerum, dicentes quod quemadmodum sol in genere corporum est, ita et rationalis anima in genere suo. Videmus vero solem unum numero esse ac individuum. Et eius lucem quae in eo est, si ad ipsum quippe consideretur, forma eius est et individua ac una numero. Si autem ut ab eo fluctuat sic est universaliter illuminativa tum diaphanorum omnium tum perviorum, quae ea lucida redduntur, tum coloratorum. Hoc inquam modo, tam etsi una sit numero, multa agit ac facit. Profecto et sic de intellectu, Aristoteles dicit scilicet ipsum sicut lucem".

14 Cf. *Id.*, *L'immortalità dell'anima*, p. 31.

15 See, for example, *Le Soleil à la Renaissance: Sciences et mythes ; Colloque international tenu en avril 1963 sous les auspices de la Féderation Internationale des Institus et Sociétés pour l'Étude de la Renaissance et du Ministère de l'Education nationale et de la Culture de Belgique (ULB. Travaux de l'Institut pour l'Étude de la Renaissance etr de l'Humanisme, 2)*, Bruxelles-Paris, Presses Universitaires de Bruxelles-PUF, 1965.

16 Anna De Pace has called attention to the Platonic element in the first book of *De revolutionibus* in A. De Pace, *Niccolò Copernico e la fondazione del cosmo eliocentrico*, Milano, Mondadori, 2009.

17 Niphus. *De intellectu*, p. 291: "Adhuc, cuiuslibet motoris separati pro operatione separata instrumentum debet esse separatum, quod etiam Averroes in multis locis hoc accepit, ut 8. *Physicae auscultationis* commento 15. et in 2. cap. *De substantia orbis*. Sed per ipsum rationalis anima est ars et motor separatus".

should have avoided taking recourse to geometric models with no correspondence in reality, such as deferents, epicycles and eccentrics. To respect the Aristotelian view, it would have been necessary to provide models of the planets and of the sphere of the fixed stars able to 'save' the complex astronomical phenomenology by means only of concentric circular motions[18].

Averroes was unable to produce a planetary theory in full agreement with these requirements. It would fall to his fellow countryman and contemporary Alpetragius (al-Biṭrūǧī) to develop the most persuasive mathematical proposal, based on similar principles[19]. Despite the fact that the theories of the two natural philosophers were developed independently[20], the common adherence to Aristotelian philosophy made their legacy converge in sixteenth-century Italy[21]. The 1531 Venetian edition of Alpetragius' *Planetarum theorica physicis rationibus probata* [Planetary theory demonstrated by physical reasons] came just a few years before the publication of Girolamo Fracastoro's *Homocentrica sive de stellis* [Homocentrics, or on the stars] (Venice 1538) and Giovan Battista Amico's *De motibus corporum coelestium iuxta principia peripatetica, sine eccentricis et epicyclis* [On the motion of the celestial bodies according to peripatetic principles, without eccentrics and epicycles] (Venice 1537 and Paris 1540)[22]. Homocentrism, especially Fracastoro's version of it, would constitute an important theoretical challenge for Copernicus[23], while the vexed question of the conciliation of physics and celestial mathematics would accompany the developments of astronomy for about another two centuries.

Averroes' *De substantia orbis*, translated into Latin by Michael Scot between 1227 and 1231, is a key text for considerations on the nature and properties of the heavens, in particular for discussions of the movement of the stars and the cause of their motions. That celestial bodies have a soul — writes Averroes in the first chapter of his treatise — is clear both from the 'desire' underlying their motion and from this 'locomotion' itself[24]. In the case of the planets, there is an intellectual desire directed towards the unmoved prime mover, an incorporeal intelligence to which

---

18 Averroes. *Commentum Magnum super libro De Coelo et Mundo Aristotelis*, ed. R. Arnzen, Leuven, Peeters, 2003, p. 394 (II 62, 54-57).

19 Cf. Alpetragius. *De motibus celorum*, ed. F. J. Carmody, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1952.

20 I am thankful to Josè Luis Mancha for discussing this point with me.

21 On the shared scientific-cultural background, see F. J. Carmody, "The Planetary Theory of Ibn Rushd", in *Osiris*, 10 (1952), p. 556-586, especially p. 558-559. As a standard reference on the cultural setting of Averroes and Alpetragius' work, cf. A. I. Sabra, "The Andalusian Revolt against Ptolemaic Astronomy: Averroes and al-Biṭrūjī", in E. Mendelsohn, *Transformation and Tradition in the Sciences: Essays in Honor of I. Bernard Cohen*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984, p. 133-153.

22 On this scientific context, see M. Di Bono, *Le sfere omocentriche di Giovan Battista Amico nell'astronomia del Cinquecento*, Genova, Centro di studio sulla storia della tecnica, 1990.

23 M. Á. Granada, D. Tessicini, "Copernicus and Fracastoro: The Dedicatory Letters to Pope Paul III, the History of Astronomy, and the Quest for Patronage", in *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*, 36/3 (2005), p. 431-476.

24 My considerations are based on the recent English translation of the Hebrew version: Averroes. *De substantia orbis*, ed. A. Hyman (Corpus philosophorum Medii Aevi, Averrois Hebraicus), The Medieval Academy of America-The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Cambridge (Mass.)-Jerusalem, 1986. Cf. *ibid*. p. 71.

the stars eternally aspire and which they imitate with their circumvolutions[25]. From the first pages of the text, Averroes states that the motion of the celestial bodies demonstrates the co-existence in them of two components: since nothing moves by itself, it is necessary that there be a form, or soul, that imparts movement to the celestial bodies. These theses can already be found in the systematization of Aristotle's cosmology by Alexander.

In the above-mentioned *Mabādi'* — which according to Charles Genequand is one of the main sources of Averroes' *De substantia orbis* and his commentary on *Metaphysics* XII[26] — Alexander offered the first synthesis of Aristotelian cosmology able to integrate *Physics* VII and VIII, *Metaphysics* XII and *De anima* III 5: a demonstration of the Unmoved Prime Mover based on the motion of the stars and a reflection on the cause and nature of the natural motions based on the circumvolution of the heavens, a doctrine of the celestial spheres and that of the active intellect. In this sense, Alexander's work can be considered the starting point of what I here label as "Peripatetic cosmo-psychology". In the discussions on Aristotle, he developed the theme of animation of the celestial bodies; he identified the efficient cause of their motions — the soul that desires — which acts in view of a final cause, i.e. the unmoved mover as beloved object. At the same time, he clarified the difference between the lower souls, moved by appetite, passions and wills, and those of the celestial bodies, driven only by intellectual desire given their noble, incorruptible nature[27].

Although Averroes appreciates the teachings of Alexander, of which he cites the maxim according to which Aristotle is the foundation of all sciences[28], he explicitly rejects his immanentist tendencies. He distances himself from philosophers such as Alexander, Avicenna and al-Ghazālī, who believed that an infinite motion can be derived from a finite form[29]. Alexander's position — as Simplicius underlined — is explained in the light of the conviction that souls and celestial bodies are inseparable[30]. It follows, according to Alexander, that the moving souls generate their motions without the need of separate movers. As we read in *Mabādi'*, it is a motion aimed at *imitating* the Unmoved Prime Mover, whose eternity cannot confer any other material form upon the celestial bodies but the infinity of the noblest of motions, the circular one[31]. For Alexander, no other final causes, the object of the desire of

25 *Ibid.*, Ch. 4, p. 114-115.

26 Genequand, 'Introduction', in Alexander of Aphrodisias. *On the Cosmos*, p. 1-36, 25-26.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 49: "For the divine body cannot be affected, and appetite and passion are affections; this is why the souls of the divine bodies are not specifically the same as any of the souls that exist in material things".

28 Averroes. *De substantia orbis*, p. 44.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 72: "Some of those who philosophize have said that the souls of the celestial bodies are forms in their respective matters which cannot subsist apart from a subject and that they acquire eternal existence from forms that do exist apart from matter". See also note n. 98. Averroes returns to the question, placing Avicenna close to Alexander in the third chapter, p. 104-105.

30 Cf. Genequand, 'Introduction', p. 13.

31 Alexander of Aphrodisias. *On the Cosmos*, p. 83 (on the imitation of the prime mover by the prime moved) and p. 53 (on circular motion as divine motion).

the stars, would be necessary beyond the unmoved mover. This would be the only separate intelligence[32].

Averroes distanced himself from Alexander to the extent that he assumed that the eternity of celestial motions refers to a plurality of separate intelligences. Whether he came to identify them as the souls of the celestial spheres was the subject of long disputes in the Renaissance. But regardless of this, there is convergence between Alexander and Averroes (to be explained in terms of direct reception) on one central question: the close link they established between the doctrine of the soul and cosmology. Alexander identified the active intellect of *De anima* as the prime mover of *Metaphysics* XII, just as the later Arabic commentator considered the active intellect to be the ultimate goal of the separate intelligences responsible for the motion of the celestial spheres. The relation they established among metaphysics, cosmology and psychology went on to be a question cutting across the disciplines and the areas of expertise of theologians, natural philosophers and mathematicians, with profound effects on the entangled history of cosmology and religion in the late Middle Ages and early modernity.[33]

Cosmo-Psychological Themes in Pomponazzi

What made scholars familiar with the cosmo-psychological problem and its metaphysical connections was the relevance accorded to Averroes in the curricula of medieval and Renaissance universities. Although Alexander opened up this field of scientific-speculative investigation, we can say that it was received by the late Latin world through Averroes. One of those who held lessons on Averroes' *De substantia orbis* was Pomponazzi. Documentation of this teaching is provided by an *Expositio libelli de substantia orbis* (Rome, Biblioteca Apost. Vat., Regin. Lat 1279, ff. 3r-36v) linked to a course held in 1507 at the University of Padua.

De substantia orbis filled a gap in the Aristotelian corpus, since no known text by the master dealt specifically with the nature of the celestial spheres. In his profound veneration for the philosophical architecture of *the* Philosopher, Averroes had not dared to suppose that something might be wanting in it. Hence, in the very beginning of *De substantia orbis*, he asserted that Aristotle's work on that specific topic must have been lost, but he had no doubt that it had existed.

Pomponazzi was of a different opinion. Commenting on *the* Commentator, he explained to his students that it was not necessary to hypothesize a lost treatise on the celestial spheres, since the elements to deal with the topic are found in the various Aristotelian writings. Nevertheless, he praised the author of *De substantia orbis* for his very useful work of gathering together the scattered fragments: "All of the roots

32 See I. Bodnár, "Alexander's Unmoved Mover", in C. Cerami (ed.), *Nature et sagesse: Les rapports entre physique et metaphysique dans la tradition aristotelicienne*, Louvain-la-Neuve, Peeters, 2014, p. 387-416.

33 On Averroes' connection of cosmology and psychology, cf. M. Geoffroy, "À la recherche de la béatitude", saggio introduttivo ad Averroes, *La béatitude de l'âme*, ed. M. Geoffroy, C. Steel, Paris, Vrin, 2001, p. 9-81.

and fundaments that the Commentator [Averroes] gathered in this booklet were sparsely sowed by Aristotle in his work. It is no diminishment for Aristotle that he did not compose any books in which he brought together those matters that are brought together in this book, nor is the Commentator useless, as in this book he has brought together all that Aristotle affirmed in various places"[34].

Alexander's proposition that the separation of the two components of the hylomorphic synolon must determine the end both of matter and form has consequences for the possibility of immortality of the human soul and for the nature of the heavens. Assuming the Alexandrist position, Pomponazzi explains in the commentary on Averroes that the spheres cannot be composed of matter and form, as they are eternal. However, this thesis is turned against Alexander himself, who attributed eternal *formae corporeitatis* to the heavens. In this case, it is difficult to say whether Pomponazzi agreed with Averroes or simply was elucidating his thought. Indeed, as Antonino Poppi pointed out, "the overall meaning of the small work [*Explicatio libelli de substantia orbis*] […] is more historical and hermeneutic than speculative"[35]. It seems plausible, however, that he accepted the theory of the plurality of separate intelligences while at the same time avoiding equating them with the souls of celestial bodies.

His point of view emerges in a less dubious manner in the *Questiones* on *De substantia orbis*, in particular a *Quaestio de materia celi* of 1502. The question is posed and solved syllogistically from the beginning:

> It is investigated whether the heavens are composed of matter and form, which is not the case, first, because all matter-form compounds are generable and corruptible, but the heavens are not generable nor corruptible, therefore they are not composed of matter and form. The first premise is given to the senses, the second is to be found in Aristotle, *De coelo* I 22[36].

The passage improves our understanding of the terms of the cosmological problem. It clearly indicates how assuming the inseparability of matter and form raises urgent questions not only about the otherworldly fate of man but also about the nature of the heavens. If sublunary physics deals with evanescent compounds, subjected to the flux and dissolution of the vital connection between matter and form, an adequate treatment of the heavens must provide explanations in models that overcome the hylomorphism of the world of "generation and corruption".

---

34 Petrus Pomponatius. *Corsi inediti dell'insegnamento padovano*, ed. A. Poppi, vol. 1, *Super libello de substantia orbis expositio et quaestiones quattuor (1507)*, Padova, Antenore, 1966, p. 4: "Omnes radices et fundamenta quae sunt collecta a Commentatore in hoc libello, ab ipso Aristotele per diversa sua opera sparsim sunt seminata. Et sic Aristoteles non est diminutus, dato quod non fecerit aliquem librum in quo aggregavit ista quae in hoc libro sunt aggregata; nec etiam Commentator est superfluus qui aggregavit omnia sparsim dicta ab Aristotele in hoc libro".

35 *Ibid.*, p. xxi.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 201: "Quaeritur an celum sit compositum ex materia et forma, et videtur quod non, primo, quia omne compositum ex materia et forma est generabile et corruptibile, celum est ingenerabile et incorruptibile, ergo non est compositum ex materia et forma. Maior est nota ad sensum, minor vero est Aristotelis, I *Caeli*, 22".

The cosmo-psychological theme also emerges strongly in the controversial *Tractatus de immortalitate animae* [Treatise on the immortality of the soul] of 1516. Pomponazzi begins with a reference to *De coelo*, a text from which he formed his ideas on the mortality of the soul. The demonstration of the interchangeability of what is generated and what is incorruptible (*De coelo* I 12, 282a 1-4) would have suggested to him (or confirmed) that it is impossible to demonstrate the immortality of the soul on the basis of Aristotle's philosophy[37]. However, the cornerstone of his argument lies in the gnoseological premise of *De anima* (I 1, 403 8-10) according to which no thought is produced without imagination. Although he admits that the human intellect performs its functions independently of the human support *ex parte subjecti*, because the activity of thinking is incorporeal, nevertheless, the object, i.e. the matter or the material content of its operations, is not separable from sensibility and thus from the body[38]. Without the body the soul would not be able to carry out even the smallest function.

Anticipating his opponents' cosmo-psychological criticisms, Pomponazzi warns that there is a profound difference between the soul of animals, the intellectual soul of man and the separate intelligences. While admitting that the celestial spheres are animated beings, they should not be thought of in analogy with man, whose intellect is inseparable from the body. As for their intellectual operations, the celestial intelligences are independent of the bodies to which they impart motion. The same cannot be predicated of humans, as in their case the adage "nihil est in intellectu quod prius non fuerit in sensu" [nothing is in the intellect that was not first in the senses] applies and thus there is an 'objective' dependence of the intellect on the body[39]. As we read:

> Human intelligence and intellect differ with respect to [their] dependence on the organ: in fact, human intellect receives and is brought to perfection thanks to a corporeal object, because it is moved by it; Intelligence, however, receives nothing from the celestial body, but only gives[40].

Hence, there will be three kinds of souls: celestial, human and animal in the stricter sense:

> Thus, the celestial bodies, men and the beasts are not animated beings in the same unique sense since, as we have seen, their souls are not an act of the organic physical body in the same unique sense. Therefore, in his *Paraphrasis de anima*, Alexander stated that Intelligence is called the soul of the heavens and that the heavens are called animal in a rather improper sense; Averroes seems to be of

37 Cf. Pomponazzi, *Trattato sull'immortalità dell'anima*, §2, p. 4.

38 Note that here Alexander is used against Averroes. Pomponazzi, *Trattato sull'immortalità dell'anima*, §11, p. 10.

39 *Ibid.*, §12.

40 *Ibid.*, §32. For the Latin text, cf. Pietro Pomponazzi, *Tutti i trattati peripatetici*, ed. F.P. Raimondi, J. M. García Valverde, Milano, Bompiani, 2013, p. 990: "Est et differentia inter Intelligentiam et intellectum humanum in dependendo ab organo, quoniam humanus recipit et perficitur per obiectum corporale, cum ab eo moveatur, at Intelligentia nihil recipit a corpore caelesti, sed tantum tribuit".

> the same opinion in his book *De substantia orbis*. Instead, the beasts are called animal in the proper sense, as is clear from common linguistic use. Men are then called animal in an intermediate sense[41].

Pomponazzi maintains that the human soul is mortal *per se* and immortal *secundum quid*. Indeed, it accedes to universality, to the limited extent in which thought can accede to it. The human intellect is neither completely independent with respect to the particular nor completely universal; it is part of the material and of the immaterial but it is "more material than immaterial"[42].

The cosmo-psychological theme returns and is radicalized in the *Apologia* of 1518, this time in a polemical manner in order to clear the field of criticisms by various people, especially his student Gasparo Contarini[43]. In a *Tractatus contradictorius* that circulated in manuscript form, Contarini had maintained that Aristotle's intelligences are real forms of bodies. This attested to the possibility of eternal and separable forms or souls, given the incorruptibility of celestial bodies and the nature of intelligences.

In the *Apologia*, Pomponazzi reaffirms the positions of his treatise on the soul; he underlines that the intelligences are the efficient and final cause of the celestial bodies, not their form or soul. In fact, "the forms are inseparable from their substrates and cannot be separated except by divine miracle, as happens in the Sacrament of the altar", i.e. the Eucharist[44]. Moreover, as Contarini maintains, to argue that intelligence is the form of the heavens is improper because it is like arguing that the human intellect coincides with the form of man rather than one of the faculties of the soul. In terms even clearer than in the controversial treatise on immortality, Pomponazzi differentiates between the animation of man and that improperly attributed to the celestial spheres, moved by separate intelligences:

> On the other hand, the affirmation of Aristotle, of Averroes and of the Peripatetics in general, who agree in declaring that the heavens are animated, must not be understood as if it were stated in proper terms and by synonymy, but in terms of

---

41 Pomponazzi, *Tutti i trattati peripatetici*, p. 990: "Quapropter non uno modo corpora caelestia, homines et bestiae animalia sunt, cum non uno modo eorum animae sint actus corporis physici organici, ut visum est. Ideo Alexander in *Paraphrasi de anima* dixit Intelligentiam satis aequivoce dici animam caeli, et caelum animal. Cui et consentire videtur Averroes in *De substantia orbis*. Proprie vero bestiae animalia dicuntur, sicut est communis usus loquendi. Medio autem modo homines animalia nuncupata sunt".

42 *Ibid*.

43 Contarini's *Opera* includes two books titled *De immortalitate animae*, the second of which is posterior to the publication of the *Apologia*. The master is lauded in both, and in particular at the beginning of *Liber II*. Cf. Gasparus Contarenus. *Opera*, Parisiis, apud Sebastianum Nivellium, 1571, p. 177-232, esp. p. 210: "Legi excellentissime praeceptor magna animi attentione divinam apologiam tuam, in qua mortalitatem humani intellectus rationibus astruere, simulque ea refellere conaris, quae immortalem esse animam videntur asserere. Visum sane mihi est opus adeo praeclarum et insigne, ut cum in caeteribus operibus tuis, quae aedita sunt, recentiores omnes scriptores longe superes; in hoc te ipsum plane superasse videaris". The respectful dissent with regard to the master also emerges from Contarini's later metaphysical writings. See for example Gasparus Contarenus. *Primae philosophiae compendium* [1527], Parisiis, Ex typographia Gilielmi Nigri, 1556, p. 105-106, in which the master is again refuted and yet indicated as "excellentissimus huius aetatis philosophus Petrus Pomponatius praeceptor noster".

44 Petrus Pomponatius. *Apologia*, I 1, in *Id.*, *Tutti i trattati peripatetici*, p. 1107-1538, esp. p. 1155.

> homonymy and by a certain resemblance, as Averroes writes in Chapter II of *De substantia orbis* in agreement with Alexander, who in *Paraphrasis de anima* says: 'The soul of the celestial bodies is a soul by homonymy[45].'

In the dispute with Contarini, the problem of celestial motions emerges as the key to understanding the interrelation of intellect, soul and corporeity. To the affirmation of the "contradictor" that the separability of the soul can be inferred from the existence of separate forms, i.e. those of the spheres, Pomponazzi responds with rigour, denying the pernicious analogy of human soul and celestial intelligences. It would be equally wrong to equate Intelligence with a form or soul, or to equate the Intelligence, which is separate from the celestial bodies, with the human intellect, which is inseparable from the body. According to Pomponazzi, everyone, except Averroes (and Alexander!), were in error on this point:

> But, my most learned friend, be careful: if for Aristotle and Thomas, as appears from *Contra Gentiles* II 70, Intelligence is really the form of the heavens, and if for its prime operation it does not depend on the body, why then, following the teaching of Averroes, can the [intellect coincident with the] human soul not be a form of man? The argument or answer is clearly self-eliminating. In fact, given that conclusion, that is, that the Intelligence is really a form of the heavens, one can in no way invalidate the hypothesis that the soul is one and as abstract as the Intelligence. Thus, Albert, Thomas, Scot, Giles, Gregorio da Rimini and almost endless others have openly attributed a false thesis to Averroes[46].

Soul and Celestial Physics in the Renaissance and Beyond: Perspectives

Cosmo-psychology hovers over the homocentric debates of the early sixteenth century. On the one hand, the Averroes of *De substantia orbis* acts as a vector of Alexander's ideas on this topic, albeit revised and integrated, above all regarding the theme of the plurality of celestial movers. On the other hand, the Averroes of the commentary on the twelfth book of *Metaphysics*, received together with the astronomical work of Alpetragius, prompted the search for a reformed, strictly homocentric mathematical astronomy. This is the task undertaken by Fracastoro and Amico. The two lines of thought are not unrelated, as seen from the exchanges between Contarini and Fracastoro around 1531[47]. *Gasparis Contareni Cardinalis Opera* includes a section

---

45 *Ibid.*, p. 1157: "Illud autem quod adducitur ex Aristotele et Commentatore, et universaliter ex Peripateticis, qui concordes pronuntiant caelos esse animalia, non est intelligendum secundum univocationem et proprie, sed secundum aequivocationem et quandam similitudinem, veluti Averroes in 2 capite libri *De substantia orbis* scribit, qui consentit Alexander in *Paraphrasi de anima* sic inquiens: 'Anima corporum caelestium aequivoce est anima'".

46 *Ibid.*, p. 1161.

47 The date is deduced from the reply "Hieronymus Fracastorius Gaspari Contareno S". See Contarenus. *Opera*, p. 252: "Vale e Capliys die I. Julii MDXXXI".

De Homocentricis ad Hieronymum Fracastorium [On Homocentrics to Gerolamo Fracastoro] with a critical examination of a version of *Homocentrica* that apparently circulated in manuscript form before its publication in 1538.

Contarini's astronomical writing was caused by Giovan Battista Ramusio, who passed him the work on celestial motions without eccentrics or epicycles, inspired by the teaching of "Turrius noster"[48]. The reading of *Homocentrica* would have occurred during a retreat in the countryside in the company of Marcantonio Flaminio. Contarini agrees with Fracastoro on the unacceptability of the geometric models of Ptolemy and the other *astrologers*. Yet, he is not fully in agreement with the author's approach, his principles and his solutions to some problems of celestial physics. The question of the role of the intellect and the soul of the celestial bodies emerges early on:

> You affirm in the second thesis [*suppositio*] that it is impossible that the same sphere is moved in itself [*per se*] by two intellects because the same simple body cannot have two natures. Beware that this argument will not look compelling to many. In fact, the inferior intellects intellectually grasp [*intelligunt*] the first [intellect] through its essence, as it is in all of them as an intelligible form in the intelligent intellect. Therefore, it seems convenient that the intellect or soul of the first sphere, which is the form of the other inferior ones, moves the inferior spheres [*per se*] by itself, no matter whether those motions are made directly by the first soul or by those proper to any spheres as they are informed by the first one. This is particularly the case with circular motions which, as the Philosopher asserts in the second book of *De Coelo*, do not differ in kind [*species*] but only in number[49].

It should be noted that Contarini continues to identify celestial intelligence with soul (*intellectus seu anima primi orbis*) or form of the celestial body, even though the thesis had been strongly criticized by Pomponazzi. Distinguishing between intelligence and soul would have led to the risk of an Alexandrist immanentist (and mortalist) 'deviation', which was far from Contarini's intention.

In the letter to Fracastoro, reference is made to Averroes' commentary on *Metaphysics* XII for a model of celestial causality able to resolve some problems with Fracastoro's theory. The latter had postulated a transmission of motion from the superior spheres to the lower ones in a proto-mechanistic view of the cosmic clock. To Contarini, in the wake of Aristotle and Averroes, it seems instead possible to abandon this form of causation through the evocation of cosmo-psychological themes. Soul and intellect of the celestial bodies would be moved by an intellectual desire. All in

---

48 *Ibid.*, p. 238.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 240: "Dicis in suppositione secunda, quod impossibile est eundem orbem moveri per se a duobus intellectibus, quia idem simplexque corpus duas naturas habere non potest. Vide ne haec ratio plurimis necessaria non appareat. Nam cum inferiores intellectus intelligant primum per essentiam primi, quae est in omnibus sicut forma intelligibilis in intellectu intelligente, nihil videtur officere, quin intellectus seu anima primi orbis, quae est forma aliarum inferiorum moveat per se inferiores orbes, sive is motus immediate fit a prima anima sive a propria cuiusque orbis pro ut formatur a prima, praesertim cum motus circulares, quamadmodum dicit Philosophus in secundo libro *de Coelo*, non differant in specie, sed tantum numero".

all, Contarini re-proposed the Alexandrist explanatory model according to which the celestial revolutions should be teleologically explained according to their aim:

> […] there is no inconvenience that an inferior [sphere] is not transported by a superior. I would like to add some consideration concerning causes, precisely the final ones. Celestial bodies, as the philosopher asserts in the second book of *De coelo*, are not only moved by nature, but by the soul and the intellect, which moves following a pre-established goal [*praeconceptus finis*] and [accomplishes] as many motions (each one accomplished by a specific sphere) as are needed to attain the pre-established goal. In my opinion what Averroes asserts in *Metaphysics* XII should be added, i.e., that the motion of every planet is like the motion of a particular art which follows the motion of the first mover as the principle of an art or of architecture. If one adds to your theses a consideration of the final cause can solve the doubts that your invention can raise; since it is not necessary that the superior transports the inferior […][50].

Fracastoro politely answered that he would accept the suggestion to consider alternative causal models, even though he believed that Contarini's solution was incompatible with his own approach. In *Homocentrica* — at least in the printed version — he glossed over the question. He was interested in analysing the cosmological mechanism on the basis of a few clear principles, including the proto-mechanistic one: "The inferior [spheres] are transported by the motion of the superior spheres but the superiors receive nothing from the inferior"[51].

However, Fracastoro did not overlook the Peripatetic cosmo-psychological controversies. To the question "Whether several spheres can be guided by a common intelligence" (*utrum plures orbes ab a communi intelligentia duci possint*) he gave a negative reply[52]. Thus he cleared the field of the Alexandrist doctrine of the uniqueness of the separate Intelligence that informs the various motions of the stars — a doctrine which, moreover, had been banned by the Arabic tradition commonly accepted by the Latin Scholastics. Nevertheless, he had doubts about the question of causality:

> *Chap. 5 - There is no sphere without one motion.*
> […] Thus, independently of whether a sphere is moved by itself or by some mind called intelligence, it is necessary that it moves by only one motion, because it is

---

50 *Ibid.*, p. 242-243: "[…] nihil obstat inferiorem [sphaeram] non vehi a superiori. Vellem itidem aliud addi, causae genus, finalis inquam, nam corpora coelestia, ut dicit philosophus in secundo *De Coelo*, non moventur a natura tantum, sed ab anima, et intellectu, qui movet secundum praeconceptum finem, totque motibus, et his motibus suum quaeque orbem citat, quot quibusque attingere queat finem praeconceptum. His addendum puto, id quod dicit Averrois in duodecimo *Metaphysicae*, quod scilicet motus uniuscuisque planetae, est sicuti motus particularis artis quae deservit motui primi motoris tanquam principi arti, et architectonicae. Haec si quis supposuerit praeter ea, quae tu supponis ex causa finali, poterit solvere dubitationes, quae inventioni tuae officere possunt; quandoquidem non est necesse superiorem inferiorem vehere […]".

51 Hieronymi Fracastorius. *Opera omnia*, Venetiis, apud Iunctas, 1574, f. 4*r*: "Superiorum orbium motu agi et inferiores, ab inferioribus vero nihil superiores pati".

52 *Ibid.*, f. 4*v*.

> one, unique natural principle of motion. As a matter of fact, nobody ever asserted that one sphere is moved by two intelligences[53].

To clarify Fracastoro's position on cosmo-psychological principles, it will be appropriate to examine another work of his, *Fracastorius, sive de anima, dialogus* [Fracastoro's dialogue or on the soul] (ca. 1553, published posthumously in 1555), dedicated to Ramusio. Fracastoro deals, from the first pages, with the question of immortality, which should be clarified on the basis of the *natura* of the various souls, animal and celestial. His approach is distant from the Peripatetic positions explained thus far. Instead of resorting to the three kinds of soul (of beasts, of man, and of celestial spheres), Fracastoro distinguishes between the world soul (*anima mundi*), the souls of the celestial spheres (*animae orbium coelestium*) and the souls of plants and animals (*animae plantarium et animalium*). The idea of the living cosmos and of the soul of the world from which the particular souls draw life is clearly of Platonic origin. This is how it is presented in the dialogue *de anima*:

> There are three genres of organic bodies. The first one is the universe itself, which we call world; the second is referred to the celestial spheres; the third to plants and animals. It is evident from its parts that the world itself is a kind of organic body […]. Hence, this universe looks like the most perfect animal, it lives and is ruled and moved by its soul, as all of our predecessors [*maiores nostri omnes*] asserted. Theologizing academicians have passed on to us many doctrines on the world soul […].
> That the celestial spheres are certain types of organic bodies, as well, is evident, because they are composed of dissimilar parts, some of which are denser, others rarer, and differ in magnitude, order and place but with so much harmony [*consensus*], as they are directed to certain goals and operations, with amazing virtue, so that all bodies of the universe are ruled from there. That which moves and rules those spheres is their own soul, which the philosophers call 'intelligence' and 'mind'. However, that mind is not the soul of the world, but a particular nature, which receives being and virtue from the soul of the world and operates according to that received virtue[54].

---

53 *Ibid.*, f. 4*r*: "*Unum orbem non nisi unum motum habere. Cap.* 5: […] Sive igitur orbis a seipso moveat, sive a mente aliqua et vocata intelligentia, uno tantummodo moveri necesse est, quoniam unum et naturae unius est principium, quod movet. A duabus enim intelligentiis unum orbem moveri nemo est, qui dixerit."

54 *Ibid.*, f. 149*v*-150*r*.: "Tria autem corporum organicorum videntur genera. Primum est universum ipsum, quem mundum dicimus: aliud vero coelestes orbes; tertium plantae, et animalia. Quod enim mundus ipse organicum quoddam corpus existat manifestum est ex eius partibus […]. Quare et hoc universum, tanquam animal quoddam perfectissimum, vivere, et anima sua regi, atque agitari maiores nostri omnes fere dixere: ac multa quidem de mundi anima theologizantes academici tradidere. […].Quod vero et coelestes orbes organica quoque sint corpora, manifestum est, quoniam idipsa dissimilaribus constant partibus, aliis quidem densioribus, aliis rarioribus, et magnitudine, et ordine, et situ differentibus: vero consensu tanto, tam mira virtute ad certos fines et operationes constitutis, ut omnia quae in universo sunt, corpora inde gubernentur. Quae vero eos orbes agitat, et regit Anima ipsorum est, quam Philosophi intelligentiam et mentem vocant. Non est autem haec mens, mundi anima, sed particularis quaedam natura, quae et esse et virtutem recipit a mundi anima, operatur autem secundum illam, quam recepit, virtutem".

The problematic cosmo-psychological connection gravitating around Book XII of *Metaphysics* would accompany modern astronomy for a long time. It would reappear in a new guise in the early seventeenth century, this time in geo-heliocentric attire. From 1588, a proposal from the famous Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe circulated, which intended to adopt a planetary system with the Earth immobile at the centre but with the planets revolving around the Sun[55]. Dealing with this Ptolemaic-Copernican compromise, the Lutheran professor Daniel Cramer, educated in Wittenberg and active in Stettin, proposed in his *Isagoge in Metaphysicam Aristotelis* [Introdution to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*] (Hannover 1594 and Wittenberg 1601) to lay the foundations of the Tychonic cosmology by explaining the motions of the celestial bodies of the new system on the basis of separate intelligences, duly adapted to a fluid universe traversed by the planets:

> Just as it was once believed that no sphere is moved by itself—actually, nothing moves by itself—but it was assumed that a special intelligence or mover assisted the sphere, similarly you should assume that the stars are not moved through some instruments by analogy with terrestrial beings moving with their feet, water animals with their fins, and birds with their wings. Rather, they are moved by the proper and regular ὁρμῇ, that is, the impetus of their own mover. We must believe that, in the same manner in which this [mover] assisted a solid sphere [orb] according to the opinion of the ancients, it assists any star moving without spheres. We have insisted on this aspect, to manifest the reason why it is not necessary to abandon the movers, although the spheres have vanished[56].

Cramer would have some degree of success. According to his declarations, this metaphysical foundation of the geo-heliocentric cosmos received the approval of Brahe himself[57]. In their wake, the Danish professor of mathematics and astronomy Christen Sørensen Longomontanus would use philosophical conceptions of the perfection of the heavens governed by metaphysical principles as the basis of his arguments against the celestial physics of Kepler, whose 'lowering' of the celestial world to a

---

55 There is immense literature on the topic. For an analysis of the interpenetration of astronomical and philosophical-natural themes, it is useful to refer to Granada, *Sfere solide e cielo fluido*; *Id.*, *El debate cosmológico en 1588: Bruno, Brahe, Rothmann, Ursus, Röslin*, Napoli, Bibliopolis, 1996, and N. Jardine, A. Segonds, *La guerre des astronomes: La querelle au sujet de l'origine du système géo-héliocentrique à la fin du XVIe siècle*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2008.

56 D. Cramer, *Isagoge in Metaphysicam Aristotelis*, Witebergae, Impensis Bechtoldi Raben Bibliopol., 1601, p. 182: "Sicut nullus orbis olim credebatur a seipso moveri (ut et nihil aliud seipsum movet) sed orbi praefixus astare putabatur peculiaris intelligentia seu motor; ita quoque statuendum tibi erit non moveri stellas beneficio instrumentorum, sicut se terrestria pedibus, aquatilia primis (*corr.* pinnis), volatilia alis promovent; sed cieri propria et regulari ὁρμῇ seu impetu sui motoris, qui sicut ex veterum opinione astabat orbi, ita iam stellis sine orbibus latis astare credatur. Quae ideo tantum monuimus ut manifestum sit, qua ratione etiam destructis orbibus, non ob id motores e medio tollere necess[ari]um sit".

57 For details see my essay P. D. Omodeo, "Metaphysics Meets Urania: Daniel Cramer and the Foundations of Tychonic Astronomy", in M. A. Granada, P. Boner, D. Tessicini (eds), *Unifying Heaven and Earth: Essays in the History of Early Modern Cosmology*, Barcelona, Edicions de la Universitat de Barcelona, 2016, p. 159-186.

natural causality seemed to him intrinsically sacrilegious[58]. In his *Astronomia nova* (1609), Kepler had in fact, albeit unintentionally, inaugurated a physical-mathematical vision of the cosmos able to reconcile celestial geometries and natural philosophy on new, tendentially naturalistic bases. He had criticized the presumption to reconcile the complex Tychonic system, with innumerable epicycles, and the Aristotelian principles of *Metaphysics*:

> So much variety cannot be allotted to one moving mind, but to God, as Aristotle asserts in *Metaphysics* XII 8. According to him, individual minds are responsible for [*president*] individual and very regular [*aequalissimi*], extremely simple and circular motions[59].

In the economy of Kepler's new heliocentric system, the function of the prime unmoved mover was performed by the Sun, as the natural source and regulator of cosmic life:

> The body of the Sun is the source of the force [*virtus*] that moves the planets in circles. I argued that the manner is such that the Sun remains in its place but rotates like in a lathe and emits from itself an immaterial species of body across the extension of the world, similar to the species of its immaterial light. That species [follows] the rotation of the solar body [and] rotates itself like a very rapid vortex across all of the world's extension, transporting with itself the planets' bodies in circle, alternating a more intense traction and a slacker one [...][60].

The celestial movers were also referred to a natural causality:

> As I have argued, it is most likely that the movers proper to these planets are nothing else but affections of those planetary bodies similar to the one that strives towards the poles of a magnet and attracts the iron. Hence, all of the regularity [*ratio*] witnessed by celestial motions is ruled by bodily forces [*facultates*] alone, that is, by magnetic [forces], except for the rotation of the solar body that remains in its place [*spacium*]. That [rotation] needs a vital force [*facultas*][61].

---

58 P. D. Omodeo, "The 'Impiety' of Kepler's Shift from Mathematical Astronomy to Celestial Physics", in *Annalen der Physik (Then & Now)*, 527/7-8 (2015), p. A71-A75.

59 J. Kepler, *Astronomia nova*, in *Id.*, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 3, München, Beck, 1990, p. 97: "Haec tanta varietas in unam motricem mentem cadere non potest, nisi Deus sit, suffragante Aristotele lib. XII. *Metaphysicorum* cap. VIII cui placet singulis motibus aequalissimis et simplicissime circularibus singulas praesidere mentes".

60 *Ibid.*, p. 34: Solis igitur corpus esse fontem Virtutis, quae Planetas omnes circumagit. Modum etiam definivi argumentis talem, ut Sol manens quidem suo loco, rotetur tamen ceu in torno, emittat vero ex sese in mundi amplitudinem, speciem immateriatam corporis sui, analogam speciei immateriatae lucis suae: quae species ad rotationem corporis Solaris, rotetur ipsa quoque instar rapidissimi vorticis, per totam mundi amplitudinem; transferatque una secum in gyrum corpora Planetarum, intenso vel remisso raptu [...].

61 *Ibid.*, p. 35: "Motores hi Planetarum proprii, probabilissime ostensi sunt, nihil aliud esse, quam affectiones ipsorum Planetariorum Corporum tales, qualis est in Magnete poli appetens, ferrumque rapiens: ut ita tota ratio motuum coelestium facultatibus mere corporeis, hoc est, magneticis administretur, excepta sola turbinatione corporis Solaris in suo spacio permanentis: cui vitali facultate opus esse videtur".

The passage from the Averroist cosmo-psychology to a naturalistic vitalism in astronomy becomes complete in Kepler. The *virtus motrix* of the celestial bodies is much closer to the animal spirits of Renaissance medicine than to Peripatetic psychology[62]. Hence, they are no longer separate intelligences. The only transcendent principle of the cosmos is God, the God who assures the harmony of creation and its fundamental unity. In a certain sense, Kepler's naturalistic and vitalistic vision rediscovers the basic themes of Alexander's cosmo-psychology against that of his Arabic and Latin successors.

The debates and polemics on celestial physics and metaphysics of the sixteenth-century Italian and those of the early seventeenth-century Protestant milieus revive and thoroughly examine ancient cosmo-psychological themes. The case of Kepler, once the moving intelligences are eliminated and the prime unmoved mover is immanentized (by the identification of the central Sun of the heliocentric cosmos as the cause of the planetary motions), reawakens the ghost of Alexander. Uncomfortable questions re-emerge more or less explicitly. Will finite but eternal moving souls be possible without the assistance of separate intelligences? Once the cause of the motions is immanentized, will there not be the risk of reopening the door to a thesis of inseparability of the soul from the body? Will the mortalist position of the Renaissance Alexandrists, revised and reinforced by the sacrilegious Pomponazzi, not gain strength from it? The presence/absence of Alexander in the cosmological debates of early modernity is to be identified in these themes and concerns, in the problem of the cause of the celestial motions — of the animation of the spheres — no less than in the debates on the immortality of the soul because these two themes imply each other. They are united in Alexander's treatise on the world, the so-called *Mabādi'*, as well as in Averroes' *De substantia orbis* and in the cosmologists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Alexander's ghost wanders through the cosmological Europe of the Renaissance and Reformation: it is the ghost of the doctrine of those "*che l'anima col corpo morta fanno*". In Renaissance polemics, it is not the Epicureans who are called directly into question but the Alexandrist interpreters of Aristotle. The stakes are high since they concern the compatibility with Christianity of the highest philosophical *auctoritas*, the Aristotle upon whom the immense theoretical edifice of Scholasticism had been built, upon whom the theology of the Counter-Reformation would be founded and upon whom the university curricula continued to be based throughout early modernity.

62 J. Regier, "Kepler's Theory of Force and His Medical Sources", in *Early Science and Medicine*, 19 (2014), p. 1-27. For recent examinations of the physical-animistic explanations of celestial motions in Kepler, see P. J. Boner, *Kepler's Cosmological Synthesis: Astrology, Mechanism and the Soul*, Leiden, Brill, 2013, and J. Regier, "Ghosts in the Celestial Machine: A Reflection on Late Renaissance Embodiment", in J. E.H. Smith (ed.), *Embodiment: A History*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 347-353.

FRANCESCA IURLARO

Hugo Grotius' Translation of Alexander of Aphrodisias' *De fato* in His *Philosophorum sententiae de Fato* (1648)

The importance of the reception of Alexander of Aphrodisias in early modern moral philosophy has been widely acknowledged[1]; yet, it has not been properly investigated to date as far as the 1648 work by Hugo Grotius *Philosophorum sententiae de fato et de eo quod in nostra est potestate* is concerned[2]. This text, published posthumously by Grotius' wife Maria van Reigensbergen with a dedication to Cardinal Mazarin, contains translations of texts from various philosophers on the question of fate[3]. Quite interestingly, it contains an integral Latin translation of Alexander of Aphrodisias' *De*

1 See, for example G. Boros (ed.), *Der Einfluss des Hellenismus auf die Philosophie der Frühen Neuzeit*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowtiz Verlag, 2005; E. Kessler, *Alexander of Aphrodisias and His Doctrine of the Soul: 1400 Years of Lasting Significance*, Leiden, Brill, 2011; P. d'Hoine, G. Van Riel (eds), *Fate, Providence and Moral Responsibility in Ancient, Medieval and Early Modern Thought*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2014; I refer to these contributions for further and more detailed bibliography. See also other contributions from the present volume.

2 *Philosophorum Sententiae de Fato, et de eo quod in nostra est potestate. Collecta partim, et de Graeco versae. Per Hugonem Grotium, Parisiis, Apud Viduam Ioannis Camusat, et Petrum le Petit, Regis Typographym, viam Iacobaeam, sub signo Aurei Velleris. MDCXLVIII. Cum Privilegio Regis.* Several scholars, especially those dealing with Grotius' thought and works, complain about a general lack of attention towards this important and yet neglected text. See R. Hafner, *Götter im Exil: Frühneuzeitliches Dichtungsverständnis in Spannungsfeld christlicher Apologetik und philologischer Kritik (ca. 1590-1736)*, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer, 2003; H. W. Blom, L. C. Winkel (eds), *Grotius and the Stoa: Introduction*, Assen, Royal van Gorcum, 2004, p. 4; M. Somos, *Secularization and the Leiden Circle*, Leiden, Brill, 2011, p. 357 fn. 284; D. Levitin, *Ancient Wisdom in the Age of New Science: Histories of Philosophy in England*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 52-53. F. Iurlaro, "Divine Decrees and Human Choices: Grotius on the Law of Fate and Punishment", in *Grotiana*, 40/1 (2020), pp. 76-101.

3 Grotius' collection of *sententiae* on fate comprise excerpts from: Alcinous, Alexander Aphrodisiensis, Ammonius Hermae, Apuleius, Bardesanes, Chalcidius, Chrisyppus, Cicero, Clemens Alexandrinus, Clemens Romanus, Diogenianus, Epictetus, Epicurus, Gellius, Hierocles, Iamblicus, Iustinus Martyr, Lucretius, Iosephus, Maximus Tyrius, Moses Maimonides, Origenes, Plato, Plotinus, Plutarchus, Proclus, Simplicius, Tacitus, Tatianus. For a complete overview of Grotius' selction of authors (and for the conceptual *fil rou*ge that binds them together), see F. Iurlaro, "Divine decrees and human choices", pp. 93-100.

Francesca Iurlaro • Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law, Heidelberg, francesca.iurlaro@alumni.eui.eu

Alexander of Aphrodisias in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, ed. by Pietro B. Rossi, Matteo Di Giovanni, and Andrea A. Robiglio, Turnhout, 2021 (*Studia Artistarum*, 45), p. 193-209
© BREPOLS PUBLISHERS
10.1484/M.SA-EB.5.120543

fato (the title of which book is also recalled in the title of Grotius' selection of texts), which Grotius states to translate from two sources: an indirect one, the famous sixth book of the *Praeparatio Evangelica* by the early Church father Eusebius of Caesarea, and from a Greek manuscript. Although Grotius does not specify what manuscript it is, we are able to identify it by analyzing Grotius' intellectual environment, use of direct sources, access to libraries and involvement into the debates and intellectual interests of the *respublica literaria* of his times[4].

By so doing, it is also possible to identify the ideological motive behind the *Philosophorum sententiae de fato*. In what follows, I will provide a brief contextualization of this neglected text by contextualizing its importance as far as three main aspects are concerned. First of all, I will claim that Grotius' collection of *sententiae* on fate might be interpreted in the light of the early sixteenth- century debate on predestination that took place in the Low Countries after Jacob Arminius' proposal of reformation. The aim of Grotius' text is to reconcile the doctrine of free will with predestination (with the latter being ideologically identified with Stoicism), by providing a collection of authors bearing witness to the existence of interreligious moderation. Secondly, from this perspective, a fundamental role is played by Alexander's *De fato*, arguably because Alexander allowed Grotius to reconcile Aristotelianism with Stoic doctrines. Additionally, the importance of Alexander within Grotius' thought constitutes not only an important step in the history of reception and textual transmission of Alexander's *De fato*; but such reception is also blessed and enhanced by the *auctoritas* of Eusebius as an intermediate textual witness of Alexander's text. The intermediate role of Eusebius might be interpreted in the light of what has been described as Grotius' attempt to provide consensus among Church Fathers as a means to vindicating the importance of inter-confessional peace and to react to the religious turmoil of his times.

Thirdly, I will show that the problem of moral responsibility, which Alexander faces in the *De fato* by rejecting Stoic determinism, ties in with one of legal accountability: an analysis of Grotius' translation of Alexander's terminology in the *De fato* will allow us to appreciate such analogy. Arguably, the existence of fate rules out the possibility that anything like law exists, because there would be no need for duties and rights in a world which is self-governed by fate and where human liberty does not exists. An option that neither Alexander, nor Grotius, are willing to consider. It is in the light of these assumptions that they both provide an interesting example of the existence of punishment as a counterfactual proof of the non-existence of fate. A typical feature of human societies, the law of punishment shows not only that humans are indeed capable of free, voluntary action, for they are held legally accountable for what they do; but also that the fact that they can be punished and eventually redeemed for their wrongs provides further evidence that they are indeed free.

---

4 From this perspective, the monumental edition of Grotius' letters is a fundamental instrument in order to understand Grotius' involvement in the crucial debates of his contemporary *respublica literaria*: *The Correspondence of Hugo Grotius, digital edition*, 1st edition, October 2009. Online at http://grotius.huygens.knaw.nl

To conclude with, to show how theological and legal motives are intertwined in Grotius compels us to think about continuities and disruptions in Grotius' thought, both between Grotius the theologian and the jurist, as well as between different stages of his career and intellectual development.

Grotius' *Philosophorum sententiae de fato*: The Dutch Controversy on Fate and Free Will and the Ideological Use of Alexander of Aphrodisias

Recent scholarship has insisted on the importance played by Stoic doctrines within Grotius' moral, legal and political thought[5]. More specifically, such influence mostly consists in the importance conceded to *oikeiosis* as a main factor of social aggregation in Grotius' political and legal philosophy.[6] As he famously states in his *De iure belli ac pacis* (1625), *appetitus societatis* is what organizes human societies into normative orders according to right reason[7]. However, notwithstanding these influences (mostly ascribable to Cicero, Seneca and Lactantius[8]), it would be misleading to consider Grotius as a Stoic philosopher, both because of the uncontested primacy he concedes to Aristotle in his hierarchy of sources[9] and because of what he would define as Stoicism. As a matter of fact, as he did not have access to "a corpus of texts that was in a meaningful sense distinguished from other schools in philosophy as Stoic, nor could he rely on our modern categories meant to make this distinction"[10]. From this perspective, it has been argued that "his relationship to the philosophical tradition was consequent on other, mostly practical interests. Even his most explicit philosophical work — the posthumously published *Sententiae philosophorum de*

---

5 In 2001 a whole volume of the *Grotiana* series has been devoted to the relationship between Grotius and the Stoic thought. In addition to this issue, see J. Miller, "Grotius and Stobaeus", in *Grotiana*, 26-28 (2005-2007), p. 104-126. M. Van Ittersum, "The Wise Man is Never Merely a Private Citizen: The Roman Stoa in Grotius' *De Jure Praed*ae (1604-1608)", in *History of European Ideas*, 36 (2010), p. 1-18; L. Winkel, "Les Origines Antiques de l'*Appetitus Societatis* de Grotius", in *Tijdschrift voor Rechtsgeschiedenis*, 68 (2000), p. 393-403; Blom, Winkel (eds), *Grotius and the Stoa*, Introduction, p. 3-20. On the concept of *oikeiosis*, see R. Radice, Oikeiosis*: Ricerche sul fondamento del pensiero stoico e sulla sua genesi,* Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 2000.

6 On this aspect, see C. Brooke, "Grotius, Stoicism and Oikeiosis", in *Grotiana*, 29 (2008), p. 25-50; C. Brooke, *Philosophic Pride: Stoicism and Political Thought from Lipsius to Rousseau*, Princeton-Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2012.

7 Cf. Hugo Grotius, *The Rights of War and Peace*, ed. R. Tuck, Indianapolis, Liberty Fund, 2005: *Prolegomena*, §6.

8 For a detailed analysis of such sources, see B. Straumann, *Roman Law in the State of Nature: The Classical Foundations of Hugo Grotius' Natural Law*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015.

9 See Grotius discussing the importance of Aristotle in his *De iure belli ac pacis*, *Prolegomena*, §43. Indeed, it has been argued, "there is hardly a tendency in Grotius to single out a philosopher besides Aristotle and possibly Carneades. Grotius approached the wisdom of the ages as a collective body of knowledge from which the truth can be unveiled. A partisan attitude, he believed, would never lead to the consensus omnium that alone is the hallmark of true wisdom" (Blom, Winkel (eds), *Grotius and the Stoa*, p. 4).

10 *Ibid*.

fato — is strikingly unhistorical in its humanist emphasis on the timeless truths that the study of the classics can unearth. Essentially, therefore, Stoicism for Grotius was what he and his contemporaries cared to understand by it, in trying to serve their practical needs in turbulent times"[11].

A convincing hypothesis concerning the intellectual stimulations triggering Grotius' work of translation has been formulated by Henk Nellen, as it connects the text with the above mentioned political and religious context. According to Nellen, the *De Fato* is a response to the questions raised to Grotius by the physician Johan van Beverwijck in his *De vitae termino*,[12] where the Dutch physician invites many intellectuals of his age to write in response to the question of fate. While in Hamburg, Grotius was also invited by Beverwijck to address this very question in a letter dated on 20 January 1634. However, Grotius seems to have never replied to Beverwijck. A letter from his friend Gerard Vossius explicitly mentioning Beverwijck's request seems to suggest that it would not have been prudential for Grotius to accept Beverwikck's invitation to join such a controversial debate[13]. Indeed, in Grotius' reply to Vossius' letter, no mention is made of Beverwijck[14]. However, as claimed by Nellen himself, Grotius and intellectuals of his age and context were quite reluctant to openly state in their correspondence what were they reading or willing to work on, because they were afraid to be charged with political religious accusations, especially if considering the theological turmoil on the question of predestination.

From this perspective, the ideological background behind the *Philosophorum sententiae de Fato* might be explained, quite intuitively, with a peculiar convergence between the ancient philosophical debates on fate and Stoic determinism and the early modern theological controversy concerning free will and predestination, two crucial and yet divisive conceptual turning points of post-Reformation Europe and, more specifically, of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century Dutch intellectual

---

11 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

12 Cf. H. J. M. Nellen, "*De Vitae Termino*: An Epistolary Survey by Johan van Beverwijck (1632-1639)", in R. Schnur, A. Moss (eds), *Acta Conventus Neolatini Hafniensis: Proceedings of the Eighth International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies: Copenhagen 12 August to 17 August 1991*, Binghamton, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1994, p. 731-740; see also F. Iurlaro, "Divine decrees and human choices", *forthcoming.*

13 It is Vossius to send him this letter (*The Correspondence of Hugo Grotius*, letter of 22 March 1634, n. 1920): "Video Bevervicium hoc agere, ut judicium quoque tuum perscribas, ipse autem tomo secundo inserat. Id quidem an placeat satis, nescio. Sed scio illud, Rivetum, antehac theologiae apud Leidenses professorem, ubi legit judicium Episcopii, dixisse se adversus illud scripturum. Et jam in eo totus esse dicitur. Salmasius, qui et ipse sententiam rogatus erat, et sic satis prolixum opus composuit, negat se passurum, ut divulgetur. Nempe maligno adeo saeculo metuit, ne et ipse vapulet. Etsi et alteram caussam habet. Seorsim legi sua malit quam ut in turba compareant. Credo, si Grotii vel Salmassi essent, quorum judicia promuntur, non invitus se quoque principibus permixtum agnoscat Achivis. Nunc minuti quitedm heroes et, ut sic dicam, dii patellari, si modo dii, intercurrunt. Putavi tua interesse, ut hoc scires, etsi ea sis prudentia, ut istorum etiam nescius non sis scripturus quorum possit poenitere".

14 *The Correspondence of Hugo Grotius*, letter of 26 May 1634, n. 1929.

environment[15]. Despite initially arising as a religious revolt, it later tied in with the Dutch revolt against the Spanish supremacy and exploded as a turbulent political dissension after the Twelve-Year Truce.[16] A prominent instigator of such debate was Jacob Arminius, who reacted against the radicalness of the Calvinist doctrine of absolute predestination, according to which no room was left for individual freedom of choice but, rather, God has pre-established damnation for some and salvation for others with no actual and active possibility of redemption for human beings[17]. In other words, Arminius' proposal was to take human dignity back at the center of the religious debate, by insisting on the fact that the Calvinist position might lead to the conclusion of attributing evil to God, and that the best way to avoid this dangerous result was to separate God's foreknowledge from determinism. One of Arminius' most radical supporters, Johannes Wtenbogaert, collected such claims into the so-called five articles of the Remonstrance (1609-1610).

When the States of Holland ordered Remonstrants and Contra-remonstrants to tolerate each other (1611),[18] Grotius sided with this conciliatory position in his *Meletius, sive de iis quae inter Christianos conveniunt epistola* (1611),[19] a first attempt to reconcile Christian beliefs on the question of grace by virtue of their similarities rather than differences. Quite interestingly, Grotius' correspondence with the Dutch theologian Antonius Walaeus from this very same period demonstrates that an interesting terminological parallel between the doctrine of predestination and "Stoicism" arose. In other words, according to Walaeus, Arminius' mistake was to instigate conflict by

---

15 On this, see A. Duke, *Reformation and Revolt in the Low Countries*, London, Hambledon Press, 1990; H. J. M. Nellen, E. Rabbie (eds), *Hugo Grotius - Theologian: Essays in Honour of G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes*, Leiden, Brill, 1994; E. Rabbie, "Introduction", in Hugo Grotius. *Ordinum Hollandiae ac Westfrisiae Pietas (1613)*, ed. E. Rabbie, Leiden, Brill, 1995; I refer the reader to the accurate bibliography of this last edition for more detailed references on the Dutch reformation.

16 Cf. R. Lesaffer (ed.), *The Twelve Years Truce (1609): Peace, Truce, War and Law in the Low Countries* (Studies in the History of International Law, 6), Leiden, Brill, 2014.

17 On the figure of Arminius, C. Bangs, *Arminius, A Study in the Dutch Reformation*, Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1971; T. M. van Leeuwen, K. D. Stanglin, M. Tolsma (eds.) *Arminius, Arminianism, and Europe: Jacobus Arminius (1559/60-1609)*, Leiden, Brill, 2009.

18 Later on, Arminius' doctrines were systematized and a Synod was held in Dort (1618-1619), which should have brought legitimacy to the movement, but eventually denied such political legitimation and outlawed the movement. In the aftermath of such events, the controversy ceased to be only religious in kind, and started to (pervasively and, often, even instrumentally) involve the relationship between political authority and religious tolerance, as well as the question of the supremacy of the State over the Church; for this and other political reasons, the most important leading figure and protector of the Remonstrants, as well as a supporter of the supremacy of the State over the Church, Johan Van Oldenbarnevelt, was sentenced to death (1619) and Hugo Grotius, himself a Remonstrant, was imprisoned (1618). It is possible to keep track of Grotius' interest in all these controversial issues in his early theological works, like his *De imperio summarum potestatum circa sacra* (finished right before his arrest and published in 1647).

19 This early theological work from Grotius was only discovered in 1984 by G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes. See G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes, "Introduction", in Hugo Grotius. *Meletius sive de iis quae inter Christianos conveniunt*, ed. G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes, Leiden-New York-København-Köln, Brill, 1988; G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes, "Some Remarks on Grotius' *Excerpta Theologica*, Especially Concerning His *Meletius*", in Nellen, Rabbie (eds), *Hugo Grotius-Theologian*, p. 1-17.

polarizing the religious debate around two irreconcilable extremes[20]: the libertarian position justifying human action and moral responsibility entirely through human will, which is referred to by Grotius in this exchange of letters as "Pelagianism"[21], and, on the other side, the one insisting on the exclusive influence played by God's predestination and foreknowledge on human actions (eventually and, paradoxically, ascribing sin to God) which is explicitly called "Stoicismus". However, as Grotius states in his correspondence, for him the controversy was a matter of method rather than of substance. As for the substantial aspect, both positions are extreme and Grotius, in a desperate attempt at moderation, seeks to reconcile them by providing a conciliatory doctrine of conditional predestination, as he states in one of his early theological texts, the *Conciliatio dissidentium de re praedestinaria et gratia opinionum* (1613).[22] In other words, God's foreknowledge knows what "posita quacunque hypothesi" human will is capable and willing to do, even bad actions (without ascribing such bad actions to God, but rather considering them evidence of human liberty)[23].

As for the methodological aspect of the problem, two fundamental and (for him, more important than substantial questions) methodological claims are made by Grotius. First, he claims that adhering to the doctrines of Church Fathers and recreating a consensus among them was a better method to found consensus among Christian beliefs. Later in 1613, Grotius wrote as a fiscal advocate for Holland his *Ordinum Hollandiae ac Westfrisiae pietas*, a refutation of the orthodox Calvinist position and a "justification of the policy of Holland" against the accusation of Lubbertus charging the States of Holland for the appointment of Vorstius, suspected of Socinianism, as a successor of Arminius at the University of Leiden[24]. In this text,

---

20 See Rabbie, "Introduction", in Grotius. *Ordinum Hollandiae ac Westfrisiae Pietas*, p. 79; Appendix IV, letters 4-6, p. 443-444. In *Ordinum Hollandiae*, Grotius refers to these two extremes as Scylla and Charybdis (*ibid*., p. 133).

21 *Ibid*., p. 9-10.

22 Grotius seems to have relied on his *Conciliatio* for his *Ordinum Pietas* and that was published posthumously in *Opera theologica omnia* (in which also the *De fato* was re-edited, in 1679). For a detailed analysis of Grotius' *Conciliatio,* see L. Nocentini, 'Introduzione', in Hugo Grotius. *Conciliazione dei dissensi sulla predestinazione*, ed. L. Nocentini, Tirrenia, Edizioni del Cerro, 1997; F. Muhlegger, *Hugo Grotius: Ein Christlicher Humanist in Politischer Verantwortung*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2007, p. 190. A similar point is conveyed by Grotius in Hugo Grotius. *Via ad conciliandas quae inter Hollandiae ministros de praedestinatione et annexis capitibus agitantur*, ed. H. J. M. Nellen, E. Rabbie, in *Grotiana*, 18 (1997), p. 3-40.

23 "Esse in Deo scientiam quondam mediam sive conditionatam, quam norit quid posita quacunque hypothesi facture esset voluntas hominis… haec doctrina ita proposita, sobria est, ad pacem et aedificationem Ecclesiae faciens, praesertim si singula eius membra ad eos usus referantur, ad quos in Scriptura inveniuntur proposita. Sacrae enim literae docet, Deum praescire ab aeterno etiam pessimas actiones, ne quid credamus temere a Deo permitti, et sine bono iustoque fine, cum alioqui facillimum ipsi fuerit impedire eventum praescitae malitiae, Actor. 11, 27. Docent etiam hominibus impenitentibus a Deo praescitis decreta ab aeterno supplicia, ut incommutabili severitate deterriti caveamus nobis ne eorum exempla imitemur, Iudae. 4" (Hugo Grotius. *Conciliatio dissidentium*, in Hugo Grotii *quaedam hactenus inedita, aliaque ex Belgice editis Latine versa Argumenti Theologici, Juridici, Politici*, Amstelodami, Apud Ludovicum Elzevirum 1652, p. 243).

24 Rabbie, "Introduction", in Grotius. *Ordinum Hollandiae*, p. 38.

again, on matters concerning predestination, there is a further reference to the works of Church Fathers as the best way to mediate between Stoicism and Pelagianism[25]. As has been pointed out, Lubbertus reacts against Grotius' *Ordinun Pietas* precisely on his use of patristic sources, i.e. the choice of Church Fathers to convey the idea of irenicism, moderation and peace among religious confessions.

Scholars have emphasized the importance of *consensus patrum* in Grotius' irenicist project, especially the normative use of patristic sources as a consequence of the impact of legal humanism on Grotius' method. In other words, the idea emerges that theological doctrinal controversies must be explained with the texts of the early Fathers of the Church, while leaving space for tolerance where such texts did not provide answers[26]. In this respect, Grotius stresses the epistemic modesty of antiquity[27], as opposed to the violent polemical attitude of his contemporaries. Also, as he suggests, "we are not using these authorities to attack anyone. They were men and could blunder. […] I say only this: was Chrysostom a Socinian, was Ambrose, were so many other ancient Fathers? If they lived now, would they not be acceptable in our Church? These are the questions I would like to see answered. If someone says that they are not to be tolerated, his arrogance will be intolerable to all pious people; if he thinks that they should be tolerated, let him not be a respecter of persons; let there be equity, which requires equal treatment of equal cases"[28]. In other words, the apologetic testimony of the Church Fathers, provide us with a repository of different and not necessarily conflicting doctrines on the question of grace and predestination; and, as we would not retrospectively charge them with this of that heresy, so should not we accuse our contemporaries for doctrines that we should simply tolerate.

A second methodological strategy on which Grotius relies upon consists in appealing to humility as an epistemic instance of moderation. If ancient sources teach us with modesty, the more humble, the more reasonable: "since habituation and upbringing could entrench destructive theological debate, public institutions like churches and universities need to embody the epistemic humility that makes peaceful coexistence possible"[29]. Unlike Alexander, Grotius lives in a time in which Aristotle being the only source might be detrimental to the development of science[30]. Therefore, he proposes a more eclectic vision of knowledge. This goes hand in hand with the belief that human nature can change and that its fate and moral orientation is not pre-established by God, but rather the effect of human will; at the same time, the fact that people can change their mind is essential to social coexistence and toleration. From this perspective, there is a connection between law and theology in Grotius'

---

25 *Ibid.*, p. 79.

26 Cf. S. P. Bergjan, "The Patristic Context in Early Grotius", in H. Blom (ed.), *Property, Piracy and Punishment: Hugo Grotius on War and Booty in* De iure praedae: *Concepts and Contexts*, Leiden, Brill, 2009, p. 127-146.

27 Grotius. *Ordinum Hollandiae,* §38.

28 *Ibid.*, §49.

29 Somos, *Secularization and the Leiden Circle*, p. 358.

30 On this, see Straumann, *Roman Law in the State of Nature*, p. 76.

secularizing enterprise.[31] Against these religious controversies, it was essential for intellectuals like Grotius to conceive of secularization as the best way to achieve inter-confessional peace by providing consensus among sources of antiquity, as an instance of intellectual eclecticism and, therefore, to prevent dogmatic extremism. The overlap between such polemics and the contemporary theological debates was a common concern of the environment in which Grotius was trained, commonly known as the Leiden Circle, and it was addressed by other intellectuals like Peter Cunaeus and Daniel Henisius; quite interestingly, they also start to quote Alexander of Aphrodisias to make the point of inter-confessional peace[32]. This irenic intent is also present in the later *De veritate*, which was written when Grotius was in prison and translated into Latin in 1640[33].

Consequently, this approach results from a general faith in human nature as reasonable (which is not always the case especially when religious matters are at stake) as a result of its radical epistemic uncertainty. Both in his *De veritate* and in his *De iure belli ac pacis*, by making an Aristotelian claim about human knowledge, Grotius distinguishes among "different types of evidence, depending on the nature of the matter to be proved: in mathematics, the method of proof is different from that appropriate in questions of fact, where one is dependent on wholly reliable proofs and thoroughly worked out testimonies. […] He agreed with the Stagirite that opinions only have any force when there is a consensus, that is in so far as they are confirmed by all mankind, by most of them or by the wisest … the greater the consensus, the greater the probability"[34]. In other words, as recent studies on Grotius' rhetorical method have emphasized, method varies according to the *qualitas materiae*: and on matters on which no demonstrative, mathematic proof is possible, one should look for consensus among probable testimonies. From this perspective, antiquity once

---

31 Cf. C. A. Stumpf, *The Grotian Theology of International Law: Hugo Grotius and the Moral Foundations of International Relations*, Berlin-New York, De Gruyter, 2006; J. S. Geddert, *Hugo Grotius and the Modern Theology of Freedom*, New York, Routledge, 2017.

32 See Somos, *Secularization and the Leiden Circle*, p. 117, 357.

33 On this aspect in Grotius, see J. P. Heering, *Hugo Grotius as Apologist for the Christian Religion: A Study of His Work 'De Veritate Religionis Christianae', 1640*, Leiden, Brill, 2004; Grotius also collected manuscripts on the union of Christian beliefs, as pointed out by H. J. M. Nellen, "Être à la page de l'ère de l'information: Grotius collectionneur de manuscrits sur l'union des églises", in *Dix-septième siècle*, 266 (2015), p. 91-117; more in general on irenicism and inter-confessional peace, see I. D. Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity in the Era of the Reformation*, Leiden, Brill, 2003; G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes, "Hugo Grotius as an Irenicist", in *The World of Hugo Grotius (1583-1645): Proceedings of the International Colloquium Organized by the Grotius Committee of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, Rotterdam 6-9 April 1983*, p. 43-63, Amsterdam, APA-Holland University Press, 1984; E. Rabbie, "*Nobis modica theologia sufficit*: il contesto europeo dell'irenismo di Grozio", in *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 106 (1994), p. 243-261.

34 Cf. Heering, *Hugo Grotius as Apologist*, p. 86-87. Also, as argued by Obbink, "so Aristotle does not think of the appeal to consensus as being an appeal to what absolutely everyone actually believes right now. Rather, it is an appeal to what any normal person using the relevant and appropriate procedures would think" (D. Obbink, "What All Men Believe – Must Be True: Common Conceptions *and Consensio Omnium* in Aristotle and Hellenistic Philosophy", in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 10 (1992), p. 193-231: at p. 226.

again plays a fundamental role, as already pointed out by Grotius' idea of consensus among Church Fathers. The wider the body of knowledge bearing witness to the validity of a certain value, the greater its reliability and the chance that such *consensio omnium* approximates the truth[35].

Alexander, Eusebius and Grotius: What Is in Our Power?

All these aspects might explain why, among the sources quoted and translated in this *De fato*, through which Grotius seeks to reconcile determinism with free will, a prominent role is played by the fourth-century Aristotelian commentator Alexander of Aphrodisias, himself author of a treatise on fate.[36] However, quite interestingly, no mention of Alexander is made in Grotius' early works, neither theological nor legal ones. We just find mention of Eusebius, whose *Praeparatio Evangelica* contains excerpts from Alexander's *De fato*, as we have already mentioned. This prudential attitude, as we will see, might partially explain Grotius' interest into compiling collection of sources[37] as a safe way to address political and religious controversial questions. In what follows, I will try to connect these ideological motives with Alexander's text, by analyzing Grotius translation of it and comparing it with other texts by Grotius.

Famously, Alexander's main concern in his *De fato* is that Stoic determinism[38], by excluding the possibility of free, voluntary and independent human action, fails to provide a justification for human behavior and to account them with moral responsibility. The question of how to integrate the exercise of free will within a system of natural and moral necessitation was already faced by Chrysippus, who argued that "what is in our power" is what we are responsible for by virtue of our own action, without

35 This might, additionally, constitute one further influence of the Stoic concept of *consensio omnium*, as developed and enhanced by Alexander of Aphrodisias. See R. Todd, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on Stoic Physics: A Study of the* De Mixtione *with Preliminary Essays, Text, Translation and Commentary*, Leiden, Brill, 1976.

36 On Alexander's *De fato*, see A. A. Long, "Stoic Determinism and Alexander of Aphrodisias' *De fato* (I-XIV)", in *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 52 (1970), p. 247-268; F. P. Hager, "Proklos und Alexander von Aphrodisias über ein Problem der Vorsehung", in J. Mansfeld, L. M. de Rijk (eds), *'Kephalaion': Studies in Greek Philosophy and its Continuation Offered to Professor C. J. De Vogel*, Assen, Van Gorcum, 1975, p. 171-182; R. Sharples, "Aristotelian and Stoic Conceptions of Necessity in the *De fato* of Alexander of Aphrodisias", in *Phronesis*, 20 (1975), p. 247-274; P. L. Donini, "Stoici e Megarici nel *de fato* di Alessandro di Afrodisia?", in G. Giannantoni (ed.), *Scuole socratiche minori e filosofia ellenistica*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1977, p. 174-194; A. Hahmann, *Was ist Willensfreiheit? Alexander von Aphrodisias Über das Schicksal*, Marburg, Tectum, 2005.

37 In 1623, Grotius collected poetic excerpts in his *Dicta poetarum quae apud Io. Stobaeum extant. Emendata et latino carmine reddita ab Hugone Grotio. Accesserunt Plutarchi et Basilii Magni de usu Graecorum poetarum libelli*, Parisiis, apud Nicolaum Buon, 1623.

38 On determinism and Alexander of Aphrodisias, see S. Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998; D. Frede, "The Dramatization of Determinism: Alexander of Aphrodisias' *De fato*", in *Phronesis*, 27 (1982), p. 276-298; P. L. Donini, "Psicologia ed etica in Galeno e in Alessandro di Afrodisia: Il problema del determinismo", in P. L. Donini, *Tre studi sull'Aristotelismo nel II secolo* d.C., Turin, Paravia, 1974, p. 127-185).

external factors being involved[39]. Although Alexander does not mention any of his Stoic opponents explicitly in his treatise[40], the critique against the "unnaturalness" of determinism constitutes the main polemical target of his *De fato*. Alexander's purpose is to provide an Aristotelian reading of the concept of fate (a concept, itself, absent from Aristotle's vocabulary) and to settle the question by providing, as argued by Sharples, a rational account of responsibility and an interpretation of fate as, in proper Aristotelian terms, what mostly happens by nature. This reconciliatory approach is at the basis of Grotius' *De fato*, where he seeks to "demonstrate the compatibility of free will and divine providence"[41]. That Alexander's *De fato* plays a major influence on Grotius is also proven by the fact that his text occupies the most prominent part in Grotius' selection of sources, with its 78 pages being the longest author quoted.[42] The importance and philological care devoted to the rendering of this text, translated in its entirety and with reference to a direct source (which is never the case with the other authors comprised in the *Philosophorum sententiae de fato*) seems to hint at Grotius' specific interest in this author.

However, the intermediation of Eusebius is particularly important in the light of the debate on predestination and should not be overlooked. Eusebius himself was a collector of excerpts for apologetic purposes, as well as a proponent of the mediation between divine providence and free will[43]. Grotius quotes Eusebius' works extensively, especially in his theological works where the question of predestination is addressed. Quite interestingly, the already quoted book VI of Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica* offers an interesting perspective on the same issue, as it resonates with many of Grotius' arguments. Eusebius rejects the idea of fate: "Si humanae cogitationes atque sententiae vi quadam inexorabilis necessitatis agentur; nulla iam profecto Philosophia est, nulla Religio, probis laus ex virtute nulla; nulla Dei benevolentia, nullus denique fructus susceptorum laborum contention dignus, cum necessitate atque fato rerum causae omnium assignentur"[44]. That free will and fate are incompatible

---

39 See R. W. Sharples, "Introduction", in Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On Fate*, ed. R. W. Sharples, London, Duckworth, 1983, p. 3-4.

40 Cf. P. L. Donini, *Ethos: Aristotele e il determinismo*, Alessandria, Edizioni dell'Orso, 1989, as quoted by Sharples, "Introduction", p. 21.

41 Levitin, *Ancient Wisdom in the Age of New Science*, p. 52; on compatibilism and the Stoics, see R. Salles, *The Stoics on Determinism and Compatibilism*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2005.

42 On Alexander's *De fato* textual transmission in the early modern period, see A. Coroleu, "The *Fortuna* of Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda's Translations of Aristotle and of Alexander of Aphrodisias", in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 59 (1996), p. 325-332.

43 On the figure of Eusebius, see S. Inowlocki, C. Zamagni (eds), *Reconsidering Eusebius: Collected Papers on Literary, Historical and Theological Issues*, Leiden, Brill 2011; A. P. Johnson, *Ethnicity and Argument in Eusebius' 'Praeparatio Evangelica'*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006; on Eusebius' use of quotes, S. Inowlocki, "Eusebius' Construction of a Christian Culture in An Apologetic Context: Reading the *Praeparatio Evangelica* as a Library", in Inowlocki, Zamagni (eds), *Reconsidering Eusebius*, p. 199-223; S. Inowlocki, "Eusebius and the Jewish Authors: His Citation Technique in an Apologetic Context", Leiden, Brill, 2006; A. Grafton, M. Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book: Origen, Eusebius and the Library of Caesarea*, Cambridge (Mass.), The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006.

44 Eusebius Caesariensis. *Praeparatio Evangelica*, ed. F. Viger, Paris, M. Sonnius, 1628, p. 243.

is also refuted by common experience ("cum plane sentiamus, vel ad erudiendos liberos, vel ad plagas improbis mancipiis infligendas,[...] non alterius nos causae necessitate cogi, sed prorsus voluntario nostrae libertatis impetu ad haec similiave consilia ferri") and by the fact that laws exist ("iam ipsas quoque leges ad hominum utilitatem et commodum institutas haec opinio labefactat")[45]. Indeed, "ut illam arbitrii potestatem, penes naturam hanc nostram ratione et intelligentia praeditam esse, fateri nemo non debet". Additionally, "ita voluntas ipsa nonnunquam sexcentis aliorum opinionibus sententiisque iactata, sponte licet, arbitrioque suo, voluntati tamen obsecundat alienae"[46]. In other words, not only is our moral liberty evident in the exercise that we make of it, but also in the permeability of our actions to the external words and our capability to change our mind by following other people's opinions. This is particularly important for society, because such moral flexibility allows humans to gather together and to engage into mutual social and political negotiations. In conclusion, "cum ergo tria haec rerum genera statuantur, ut aliae nostra ex voluntate pendeant, aliae prout natura postulat, aliae denique fortuito eveniant, eademque simul ad unam divini consilii rationem universae revocentur; locus plane nullus Fato relinquatur necesse est"[47]. In this respect, it has been argued that Eusebius opposes fate to history, which he conceives of as a history of decisions, providing further proof that human liberty is, together with God's providence, the main agent of historical events[48]. From this perspective, if we compare Eusebius' account with Grotius' insistence of the importance of antiquity, we might argue that an overlap exists between moral and historical agency and that we can understand one from the other.

The Text: Grotius and Alexander between Fate and Free Will

It has been suggested that Grotius became more acquainted with Stoic sources in the later phases of his life, as is also demonstrated by his later additions to his *De iure praedae commentarius*[49]. As we have seen, it is highly unlikely that, although being aware of Beverwijck's intellectual provocations, Grotius started working on his *De fato* during his stay in Hamburg between 1634 and 1636, given the quasi-total lack of books (let alone manuscripts) he had to confront with — and complain about — in that city. Indeed, it seems more reasonable that Grotius has undertaken such work of collection and translation of sources in his days as a Swedish ambassador in Paris (1635-1645), a city in which, among other benefits,

45 *Ibid.*, p. 244.
46 *Ibid.*, p. 249.
47 *Ibid.*
48 As argued by G. F. Chesnut Jr., "Free Will and Nature in Eusebius of Caesarea», in *Church History*, 42 (1973), p. 166. Furthermore, "we can say that for Eusebius providence means God's control over the whole fabric of history with its interlacing pattern of nature, accident and free will" (p. 180).
49 Blom, Winkel, "Introduction", in Blom, Winkel (eds), *Grotius and the Stoa*, p. 10-12.

there was certainly the bless of the abundance of books.[50] Against the background of the Parisian context, Grotius' translation of Alexander's *De fato* from an original Greek source might also help us narrow down the possible sources he might have drawn upon. In the title of his section on Alexander of Aphrodisias, Grotius states: *Peripateticorum sententia Alexandri Aphordisiensis liber ad Imperatores. De fato et de eo quod nostra est potestatis laudatus, et magna ex parte citatus ab Eusebio preparationis ad Evangelium libro VI. Collatus et cum Eusebio et cum manuscripto*.[51] Grotius does not further specify what manuscript he refers to, but we can identify three possible direct sources he might have consulted, both by comparing such sources with those present in the libraries he had access to and with Grotius' collation of the *De fato* with Eusebius' *Praeparatio*..[52]

What is, however, problematic is that we do not have references to Alexander in Grotius' early and most famous texts, his *De iure praedae* and *De iure belli ac pacis*. This, on the one hand, confirms the idea that Stoic fate was a later interest of Grotius, but at the same time makes it harder for the interpreter to understand why and to what extent the influence of Alexander is tangible in Grotius' legal works. It could be argued that, since Eusebius is already extensively quoted in his early works, Grotius might have known Alexander indirectly and eventually decided in his later Parisian years to provide a more precise translation of Alexander's *De fato*. In what follows, I will read Grotius' translation of Alexander's text in the light of his wider production, by showing three thematic affinities and possible influences and relating them both to Alexander's and to Eusebius' texts: the insistence of free will, the distinction between natural and voluntary acts and the example of punishment as a counterfactual proof of the existence of free will.

What Is Naturally *in Our Power: Free Will, Fate and Moral Accountability*

We have already described Grotius' compatibilism on the question of fate in his theological works. Does this question also have an impact on his legal doctrine? Indeed, for Grotius, the question of fate also had incredibly compelling legal

50 H. J. M. Nellen, *Hugo Grotius: A Lifelong Struggle for Peace in Church and State*, Leiden, Brill, 2014, p. 501; on Grotius in Paris, see H. J. M. Nellen, "*Disputando inclarescet veritas*: Grotius as a Publicist in France", in Rabbie (ed.), *Hugo Grotius – Theologian*, p. 121-144. The phrase "disputando inclarescet veritas" is taken from Grotius' letter to his brother Wilhelm (*The Correspondence of Hugo Grotius*, letter of 4 December 1638, n. 3874) and is immediately reminiscent of a similar passage of Grotius' translation of Alexander of Aphrodisias' *De fato*, where he claims that "quia vero nonnullorum dogmatum firmior sit structura, disputando cum eis qui contra sentient, in qua inquisition quid est quod maius momentum habere possit, quam nosse Aristotelis sententiam, eos alloquar qui non eadem cum ipso dixere, ut contendendo inter se utrinque sunt dicta, magis elucescat veritas" (Grotius. *Philosophorum sententiae de fato*, p. 146).

51 *Ibid*. p. 143.

52 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Suppl. *Grec. 292.*, foll. 79-103v, 103v-106. On Bouillau's manuscript, see M. Schierl, *Die Handschriften, Ausgaben und Ubersetzungen von Iamblichos de Mysteriis. Eine Kritisch-Historische Studie* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag 1957), p. 153. For a discussion of this manuscript, together with an assessment of the relationship between Grotius and Bouillau, see F. Iurlaro, "Divine decrees and human choices", pp. 87-89.

consequences. It implied the urgent question of moral responsibility, and the very possibility to found a peaceful social coexistence on a solid basis: if fate governed human interactions, accountability of actions would be impossible and, consequently, the very foundations of human society dangerously threatened. In his *De iure praedae*, he argues that:

> whatever each person's understanding has ruled for him regarding a given matter, that to him is good. For God created man *autexousion*, free and *sui iuris*, so that the actions of each individual and the use of his possessions were made subject not to another's will but to his own. Moreover, this view is sanctioned by the common consent of all nations. For what is that well-known concept, natural liberty, other than the power of the individual to act in accordance with his own will? And liberty in regard to actions is equivalent to ownership in regard to property[53].

It has been suggested that the use of the term *autoexousion* derives from Alexander.[54] Indeed we find the term in his *De fato*, which Grotius translates as "libertas voluntatis" or "quod est in nostro iure" in the context of the famous discussion on the nature of fate, by explicitly connecting the moral problem of free will with some sort of legal capacity.

Indeed, that there is something such as fate is anticipated by "hominum quaedam notio"[55], but what it consists of is not agreed[56]. Also, we also use the term fate, "quoties aliquid fato dicimus provenire. Quare omnino fatum circa ea collocandum est quae fiunt alicuius rei ergo"[57]. Therefore, since all things that happen for the sake of something happen in accordance with reason or with nature, fate must be collocated in one of them or both. Things that come to being by *ratiocinatio* are always connected to some deliberative power:

> Sed quorum domina est optio praemia, id est quae cum virtute aut vitio fiunt, ea quoque videntur *esse nostri iuris* (my emphasis). Quod si nostrae sunt potestatis ea ad quae agenda, aut non agenda domini sumus, non potest dici fatum talium esse causa, neque causae et principia externa esse proiecta, per quae talia inevitabiliter aut fierent aut non fierent. [...] Restat ut dicatur fati vis sita in iis quae natura fiunt, ita ut idem sit natura ac fatum. Nam quicquid fatale est id ex natura est, et quicquid ex natura, fatale[58].

---

53 HUGO GROTIUS. *Commentary on the Law of Prize and Booty*, ed. M. J. VAN ITTERSUM, Indianapolis, Liberty Fund, 2006, p. 33-34. Grotius' original manuscript of *De iurae praedae* is held in the Leiden University Library (BPL 917).

54 Q. SKINNER, M. VAN GELDEREN (eds), *Freedom and the Construction of Europe*, vol. 1, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 26.

55 GROTIUS. *Philosophorum sententiae de Fato*, p. 147.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 148 ("non an sit, sed quid sit").

57 *Ibid.*

58 *Ibid.*, p. 153.

However, things that are in accordance with nature are not necessary, but "sunt quae natura fiunt ex eorum numero quae plerumque sic eveniunt: non tamen mera necessitate"[59]. Here, again, the Aristotelian claim is clear, and connects to the idea of probability as a fact of human life, which is neither always governed by necessity, nor mathematically demonstrable. Here Alexander makes an interesting example of this point, which is also present in Eusebius[60]: we often see the human body affected by illnesses and that this happens "convenienter cum naturali compactione: non tamen in omnibus eodem modo, neque plane necessario"[61]. This also applies to souls: actions and choices impact on the way of life of people ("nam ei qui natura sit violentus et periculorum amans, solet et mors esse violenta. Hoc enim naturae fatum est"), and bad behaviours are always reproached by society not because they happen according to someone's nature or fate, but *because* of their fate ("omnia secundum naturam et fatum cuiusque procedunt, sed quaedam etiam praeter ista eveniunt")[62]. However, such fate is not an inevitable destiny everyone has to face but, rather, something that can be corrected with "sapientiae studio"[63]. Then Alexander compares this position with the Stoic one, complaining that their opinion is neither in accordance with evident facts, nor "fide dignas habet ostensiones cur res sic se habere credatur praeterea tollit omnem in volendo libertatem"[64].

Also, as has been pointed out, deliberation does not apply to things that come to be necessarily, but rather "in iis quae ita per nos fiunt": it is therefore clear that there are things that depend on us (and on our *libertatem volendi*) because we have the capability to "in quibus et contraria deligere"[65]. Human nature is naturally constituted on free will; otherwise, there would be no punishment, no voluntary agreements, no possibility to choose or withdraw from action and responsibility. These passages further emphasize the relationship between Aristotelianism and Stoicism, by providing a picture of human nature as capable of change and, therefore, of peaceful social interaction[66]. Furthermore, we find trace of the distinction between necessity and voluntarism in Grotius' distinction between natural and voluntary law. The first kind, namely natural law, can be deduced from the main principle of *oikeiosis*. Natural laws are to be searched for *in abstracto* using their compliance with *oikeiosis* as a criterion. Only if such compliance is necessary do we find ourselves before genuine natural law. The latter voluntary aspect of law is introduced by civil law, through which individuals enter into agreement with each other in order to pursue their interests, derived from their ontological indigence and in need of mutual help

59 *Ibid.*
60 As emphasized by Chesnut Jr., "Free Will and Nature in Eusebius of Caesarea", p. 173, 177.
61 *Ibid.*, p. 154. Here the quotation of Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica*, VI, 11 resumes.
62 *Ibid.*
63 Here the quotation of Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica*, VI, 11 ends.
64 *Ibid.*, p. 156.
65 *Ibid.*, p. 170.
66 On the relationship between Grotius, stoicism and Aristotle see A. S. Brett, "Natural Right and Civil Community: The Civil Philosophy of Hugo Grotius", in *The Historical Journal*, 45 (2002), p. 31-51; R. Tuck, "Grotius, Carneades, and Hobbes", in *Grotiana*, 4 (1983), p. 43-62.

from other fellow human beings. This implies an epistemological claim about the law: that it is natural, self-evident to the human mind, and yet can be the object of agreement among humans[67].

Counterfactual Proof that Fate Does Not Exist: Grotius' Doctrine of Punishment

Grotius has emphasized, through the words of Alexander, that moral and legal accountability requires *libertas voluntatis*: if there is fate, there is no law ("nam utilitate legum id est libertate obediendi legibus fatum nos spoliat")[68]. If law does not exist, then neither blame nor praise do, which is impossible:

> At vero id non est, neque enim aut omnes aut plurimos videmus ad virtutem pervenire, quod signum est eorum quae ex natura fiunt, sed multum est, si unus aliquis id adipiscatur qui ope institutionis, et exercitationis reipsa ostendit id in quo homo naturae dono caeteris animantibus praestat, a se addens id quod naturae deest, quodque ad eam perficiendam est necessarium. Et ideo est in nostra potestate virtutis adeptio: neque inutiles sunt frustraque repertae laudes a vituperationes, et in melius hortamenta: neque institutio ad recata assuefaciens praescripta legibus. Eorum quippe quae natura nobis insunt nihil est quod possit assuetudine mutari […] at mores hominum huius et istiusmodi fiunt pro diversa assuetudine[69].

That customs and behaviors can change is proved not only by Aristotle's concept of *hexis*[70], but also by the existence of punishment within human societies. According to Grotius, punishment is essentially a sovereign prerogative, to which individuals have to renounce when they enter into society (and are no longer entitled to self-defense)[71]. The consequences deriving from the acceptance of the Stoic doctrines (that deliberation is in vain and that fate governs our actions) are against the common opinion of mankind: if the Stoics paid attention to such widespread consensus, they would find out that there is a law that is believed to be just by men "tam a privatis quam a legum conditoribus in eo quod digni habent quibus ignoscatur eos qui non sponte aliquid fecerunt tanquam poena non definite in ipsas res quae fiunt, sed in modum quo fiunt"[72]. In other words, not only the mere fact of punishing is important (nature itself suggests that it is the case[73]), but also the way in which

---

67 Grotius, *The Rights of War and Peace*, p. 112.

68 Grotius. *Philosophorum sententiae de Fato*, p. 216.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 199; for a wider and comparative analysis of the problem in Grotius' thought and selection of texts in his *De fato*, see F. Iurlaro, "Divine decrees and human choices", *forthcoming.*

70 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1098b, trans. by H. Rackham (Loeb Classical Library 73), Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press 1926.

71 G. van Nifterik, "Grotius and the Origin of the Ruler's Right to Punish", in *Grotiana*, 26-28 (2005), p. 396-416.

72 Grotius. *Philosophorum sententiae de Fato*, p. 184.

73 Grotius, *The Rights of War and Peace,* p. 949.

such punishment is carried out according to the wrongful action that needs to be repaired. For this reason, Grotius suggests that there are three kinds of punishment: corrective, exemplary and a last one, to be only used against irredeemable persons for reasons of public safety (Grotius makes the example of pirates)[74]. Grotius takes this tripartite account of punishment from Seneca's *De clementia*, on which, notably, John Calvin wrote a commentary in 1532. It is clear that for these authors, the question of punishment closely connects with human tendency towards sin, as well as with the debate on predestination that has been mentioned above. Clearly, no punishment is useful for those who are already condemned by divine grace. On the contrary, as far as corrective punishment is concerned in Grotius, its efficacy relies precisely on the capacity of human nature to change: "for since all human acts, if they be deliberate, and often repeated, do beget a proneness in nature to the same, which at length turns to a habit; all allurements to vice are to be cut off as soon as possible, which cannot be done more effectually than by allaying the sweetness of the sin"[75]. This aspect is particularly interesting and coherent with Grotius' view of human nature, as well as a consequence of the rejection of fate and the reinstatement of the power of human will. Indeed,

> those acts that are unavoidable by human nature are not to be punished by human laws. For though nothing be imputed to us as a sin, but what hath the concurrence of the will, and is done freely; yet to abstain altogether, and at all times from all kinds of sin is above the strength and condition of human nature: whence it is, that all sorts and sects of men have accounted it natural for a man to sin. […] If, said Seneca, every man, who is of a depraved corrupt nature were to be punished, no man would go unpunished[76].

This passage quite evocatively sums up the questions that have been dealt with in this short contribution. To sin is natural and therefore does not have to be punished. However, that sin is natural does not mean that we necessarily have to sin, precisely as the fact that it is natural to have diseases does not mean that we necessarily have to be ill. On the contrary, notwithstanding the faith in human nature's capability to change and learn praiseworthy behaviors (since virtue derives from its effective exercise) and its tendency towards *oikeioisis* guaranteed by natural law, Grotius believes that civil laws help us to regulate the space of freedom that human will endows with. The fact that this space of human liberty is not always virtuous does not prove that virtue does not exist; rather, it proves that it can be achieved through "sapientiae studio", as Grotius claims. From this perspective, punishment needs to be fair — and address wrongful acts rather than sins — otherwise it would lose its value. Additionally, whereas legislator can punish wrongful deeds which are detrimental to society, only God can punish sins.

---

74 *Ibid.*, p. 988-989.
75 *Ibid.*, p. 963.
76 *Ibid.*, p. 992-993.

To conclude with, further research on Grotius' *Philosophorum sententiae de Fato* will certainly provide more information about these themes across the lines of Grotius' intellectual enterprise. Furthermore, it will also contribute to a better appreciation of the philosophical and theological traditions on which Grotius relies upon, as well as to a more accurate understanding of the continuities and discontinuities between his early and later writings. However, what both his theological and legal reflections have in common is a strong urge towards peaceful coexistence of opposite doctrines. Such urge is perceived by Grotius as both politically and methodologically relevant, to the point that he seems to concede the conflict of ideas a more dangerous power than a potential dispute among conflicting human wills. Whereas law and politics help us regulate the latter, it is up to intellectuals to construct a space of academic moderation where no one is blamed for his ideas and everyone is tolerated. However, quite bitterly, Grotius seems to suggest that errors of interpretation are more inveterate than bad habits: "that a man with more ease can remove any habit, though never so inveterate, than discard notions that have been entertained a great while"[77].

77 *Ibid.*, p. 1046.

Abstracts

Lucio Bertelli, *Paolo Accattino lettore della* Politica *di Aristotele*

The author analyzes Paolo Accattino's interest in a long engagement with Aristotle's *Politics*. Accattino's interest dates back to his MA thesis in the mid-1970s, which already dealt with the problem of education in Aristotle's political thought. The choice of the topic was not influenced by any scholarly trend of the moment and it expressed a genuine intellectual interest which remained at the core of Accattino's research in the following years. After describing his hermeneutic approach to Aristotle (as revealed, for instance, by his discussion of Gunther Bien's well-known interpretation of Aristotle's practical philosophy), the author addresses the question of "the parts of the state". His contribution pays special attention to Accattino's commentary of *Politics*, Book 3, as well as his sophisticated analysis of traces therein of Plato's political thought (e.g., in relation to Plato's conception of absolute power).

Pier Luigi Donini, *Paolo Accattino interprete del* De intellectu *di Alessandro di Afrodisia*

The author analyzes the meaning of Alexander of Aphrodisias' *On the intellect* in Accattino's interpretation, and he brings out the novelty and nature of the literary genre in which, according to Accattino, the *De intellectu* must be situated. Only in this light can one understand the method of exposition by which the different philosophical options are analyzed and weighed by Alexander. Those are not the usual elaborations that we know from his other writings (even from the original treatises). They have a strictly personal destination, serving as a sort of reminder for the author himself. The latter notes down as an aide-memoire the kernel of a specific interpretation that he heard in the classroom from one of his teachers, a certain Aristotle of Mytilene, also mentioned by Galen as an Aristotelian philosopher. With this in mind, we can make sense of some peculiarities and seemingly bizarre passages in Alexander's exposition, intermingling problems concerning the human intellect with others concerning the divine. The piece ends with an instructive example of the difficulties that have faced interpreters of Aristotle from Alexander to recent scholars of the Aristotelian tradition.

Amos Bertolacci, *«The Excellent among the Earlier Scholars»: Alexander of Aphrodisias in Avicenna's Metaphysics*

A glaring example of the centrality of Alexander of Aphrodisias' metaphysics in medieval Arabic-Islamic philosophy is provided by the most important philosopher of the so-called

"classical" or "formative" phase of *falsafa*, namely Avicenna (d. 428H/1037). Alexander of Aphrodisias is surely one of the main Greek sources of Avicenna's metaphysics, as his four explicit quotations in the most important metaphysical work by Avicenna — the *Ilāhiyyāt* (*Science of Divine Things*), of *Kitāb al-Šifāʾ* (*Book of the Cure* or *of the Healing*) — attest. The present contribution analyzes Avicenna's four explicit references in the *Ilāhiyyāt* to the writing *Maqāla fi l-Qawl fi mabādiʾ al-kull bi-ḥasab raʾy Arisṭāṭālis al-faylasūf* (*Treatise on the Speech regarding the Principles of the Universe according to the Opinion of Aristotle the Philosopher*) ascribed to Alexander in the Syriac and Arabic tradition, contextualizes them in the framework of Avicenna's recourse to the philosophical and scientific authorities that he mentions in this work, and discusses the reliability of the interpretation of the *Alexander Arabus* that Avicenna provides.

Matteo Di Giovanni, *New Wine in Old Vessels: Alexander of Aphrodisias as a Source for Averroes' Metaphysics*

Besides his best-known merits as a philosopher, Averroes stands out in the history of the classical tradition as a unique testimony to Alexander's lost commentary on *Metaphysics* Lambda and, through it, his interpretation of the argument running through the whole text of the *Metaphysics*. The gist of this interpretation is laid out in the elaborate prologue to the Lambda commentary that goes back to Alexander and is preserved by Averroes. Building on this textual evidence, the study investigates Averroes' philosophical appropriation of the Alexander material that is interwoven into the fabric of the former's exegesis, from the earlier epitome to the later long commentary on the *Metaphysics*. A number of doctrines turn out to be ultimately inspired by Alexander, including Averroes' view of the tripartite structure of metaphysics, his notion of book Gamma as an epistemology ("specific logic") for metaphysics, the function of Delta, the downgrading of both mental and accidental being in Epsilon, and Aristotle's argument in Zeta. Averroes' debt to his source is brought to the fore without prejudicing the further question, awaiting future research, of whether Averroes' acquaintance with Alexander's line of interpretation was always unmediated or any figures in the philosophical tradition played some role in its transmission.

Joël Biard, *L'alexandrisme comme rationalité philosophique*

In his *Questions on the Soul* John Buridan classifies possible stances concerning the long-standing debate over the separability of the intellective soul. He outlines the mutual relations, points of agreement and disagreement, between the doctrine of faith (close to that expressed by Thomas Aquinas and enshrined by the Council of Vienna), that of Averroes, and that which was attributed to Alexander of Aphrodisias, and assesses their value from the point of view of truth, probability and demonstrability. The paper argues that this discussion constitutes the theoretical frame for debates over the immortality of the soul not only in the decades immediately following Buridan but until the work of Pietro Pomponazzi in the sixteenth century. It also shows that the criteria for evaluating each position is not primarily its truth-value but its epistemic features, by considering at a meta-level their mode of discursivity.

Amos Corbini, *"Alexander of Aphrodisias" in the Medieval Latin Tradition of the* Posterior Analytics*: Some Remarks*

After a brief survey of the status quaestionis concerning our fragmentary knowledge of Alexander's commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* (based on Moraux' studies), and traces of it in the Latin medieval tradition (based on Ebbesen's), the article presents two newly-discovered vestiges of the work in the Latin exegetical material, one in a scholium that is found in the manuscript tradition of Robert Grosseteste's commentary, the other in Albert the Great's commentary. At the end a recent hypothesis advanced by David Bloch provides the occasion for considerations about the historical and theoretical weight of the evidence for Alexander's commentary in the Latin tradition of the *Posterior Analytics*.

Elisa Rubino, *Alberto il Grande e il commento ai* Meteorologica *di Alessandro di Afrodisia*

According to the majority of scholars Albert the Great's *Meteora* was written before 1257, when also his commentary on the *De anima* was completed. For, in his *De anima*, Albert refers to his *Meteora* as a finished work. However, dating Albert's natural works, including his commentary on Aristotle's *Meteora*, is an issue far from being settled. New evidence relevant to this question is provided by two quotations of Alexander of Aphrodisias' commentary on *Meteorologica* that are found in Albert's *Meteora*. The article aims at showing through textual analysis that Albert used Alexander's commentary on the Aristotelian meteorology for his own exegesis of *Meteorologica*. Since Alexander's commentary was translated by William of Moerbeke as late as 1260, this evidence indicates that Albert did not complete his commentary on *Meteorologica* before 1257, as commonly assumed, but after 1260. The core hypothesis is based on linguistic analysis: some technical terms that were not used in Gerard of Cremona's *Translatio vetus* of Aristotle's *Meteorologica* can be found in Moerbeke's translation of both Alexander's commentary and Aristotle's *Meteorologica* (known as *Translatio nova*).

Luigi Silvano, *(Pseudo-)Alexander of Aphrodisias between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Notes on the Afterlife of the* Medical Puzzles and Natural Problems

The author explores the reception of Pseudo-Alexander of Aphrodisias' *Medical Puzzles and Natural Problems*, a collection of *problemata* probably dating to the third-to-fifth century. It focuses on three Latin humanistic translations produced by Theodoros Gaza, Giorgio Valla, and Angelo Poliziano. Even though they were largely used by scientists and physicians in the Renaissance, and are as such very relevant to the history of modern medicine, these translations are not available in modern editions and have not been the object of specific studies. The article contains a brief presentation of these translations and a first attempt at comparison for the portion of text corresponding to the Preface to Book 1 of Pseudo-Alexander's *problemata*. A synoptic edition of the three translations of this section is offered in the Appendix.

Barbara Bartocci, *Topics and Syllogistic: Agostino Nifo Reading Alexander of Aphrodisias*

This paper deals with Agostino Nifo's use of Alexander of Aphrodisias' commentary on Aristotle's *Topics*, with a special focus on the notion of *tópos* (*τόπος/locus*) and on the relation between the Aristotelian syllogistic and the doctrine of the topics. The first part of this paper succinctly traces the history of the Latin and Greek traditions of the topics and then examines the reception of these traditions in the logical works – particularly in the commentary on Aristotle's *Topics* – of Agostino Nifo (1470ca-1538), who was the first Latin commentator on Aristotle's *Topics* who had access to Alexander of Aphrodisias' commentary on that work. The second part of this paper analyses Alexander's and Nifo's accounts of the nature of the *locus* and of its function in dialectical syllogisms. We argue that Nifo closely follows Alexander in many respects, especially in considering topics as semantic rules of inference, in assigning structural and heuristic functions to the *loci* in relation to the dialectical syllogism from an hypothesis *ex transumpto* and, moreover, in bridging the doctrine of the topics with the syllogistic of the *Prior Analytics*. However, we maintain that unlike Alexander, Nifo does not attempt to bridge the Peripatetic and the Stoic syllogistic because for Nifo both the Aristotelian syllogistic and the doctrine of the topics pertain to term logic.

Pietro Daniel Omodeo, *Presence/Absence of Alexander of Aphrodisias in Renaissance Cosmo-Psychology*

The essay deals with the circulation of Alexander's synthesis of Aristotelian cosmology, metaphysics and psychology in Renaissance debates over the separability and immortality of the soul. Although his work on these topics was not directly received, Averroes' *De substantia orbis* constituted the basis for discussions on the cosmos, the soul, and the body by scholars such as Pomponazzi, Nifo, Contarini, and Fracastoro. Their appropriation of Alexandrist themes through the transformational mediation of Averroes affected debates over celestial physics until the early seventeenth century.

Francesca Iurlaro, *Hugo Grotius' Translation of Alexander of Aphrodisias'* De fato *in His* Philosophorum sententiae de Fato *(1648)*

Grotius' *Philosophorum sententiae De fato* is a useful resource to understand his use of philosophical doctrines, especially with regard to the figure of Alexander of Aphrodisias. The famous Aristotelian commentator plays a fundamental role in this minor and neglected text of Grotius, who translated from Greek Alexander's *De fato*, where the Stoic doctrine on fate is overtly criticized. This text sheds light on the reception of Alexander in the Dutch milieu in the early seventeenth century; at the same time, it provides valuable information concerning fundamental themes in Grotius' thought, which he developed by relying on indirect evidence for Alexander's *De fato* in Eusebius of Caesarea, as well as by consulting and translating a Greek manuscript in Paris.

Indices

Index of Manuscripts

Bologne, Biblioteca Universitaria, 3635: 126
Cesena, Biblioteca Malatestiana,
S. X. 2: 149
Plut. D. XXVI. 3: 152
Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana,
Laur. 71.33: 125
Laur. Plut. 75.13: 125
Laur. Plut. 84.14: 123
Laur. Plut. 84.16: 131-141
– Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Conv. Soppr. B.4.1618: 152
London, British Library, *Harley* 6295: 126, 131-141
Modena, Biblioteca Estense Universitaria,
Mut. gr. 109 Puntoni *(a P 5.20)*: 127, 130-141
Mut. gr. 115 Puntoni *(a P 5.17)*: 126, 131-141
Mut. gr. 145 Puntoni *(a V 7.17)*: 127
Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale «Vittorio Emanuele III»,
VIII D 81: 88
VIII g 4: 87
Orléans, Bibliothèque Municipale, 283: 96, 147
Oxford, Bodleian Library, *Canon* 403: 152
Pococke 125: 50, 54
– Merton College 292: 104
295: 98
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, *Coislin* 332: 126-127, 131-141
Suppl. *Grec.* 292 : 204
Tehran, Kitābḫānah Maǧlis Šūrā Islāmī, 10198: 46
Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana,
Chigi O IV 41: 87
Ott. lat. 318: 148
Pal. lat. 1057: 151
Reg. lat. 1279: 181
Vat. lat. 2111: 131-141
Vat. lat. 2990: 128, 131-141
Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, *Marc. gr. z.* 259: 126, 131-141

Index of Names

Abraham ibn Dāwūd (*Avendauth*): 35
Abū ʿAmr al-Ṭabarī: 41
Abū Bišr Mattā ibn Yūnus: 40, 41
Accame, M.: 123-125
Accattino, P.: 5, 9, 11-21, 23-32, 36, 117, 211
Achillini, Alessandro: 59
Adam of Balsham: 152
Adenulphus of Anagni: 151-153, 156, 164, 167
Ahmed, A.Q.: 47
al-ʿĀmirī, Abū l-Ḥasan: 36, 37
al-Āmulī, H.: 53
Akasoy, A.: 65
Albert the Great: 34, 35, 57, 58, 100-103, 109-116, 151, 153, 155-156, 163, 167, 185, 213
Albert of Saxony: 77
Albertino da Lessona: 123
Alcinous: 193
Alfred of Sareshel: 111, 113-115
Ambrosius, Aurelius: 136, 143, 199
Amico, Giovan Battista: 179, 185
Ammonius: 43, 193
Anaxagoras: 36, 37, 87
Anawati, G.C.: 53
Andronicus Callistus: 124
Angelus of Camerino: 151-152, 155, 157
Antolic, P.: 96
Antonius de Strata: 123
Aouad, M.: 33
Apuleius Madaurensis: 193
Argyropoulos, John: 91
Arminius, Jacob: 194, 197-198
Aristocle of Messene: 25
Aristotle of Mytilene: 25, 26, 27, 211
Aristotle of Stagira: 9, 11-21, 23-32, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 46, 47, 48, 49, 59-76, 81, 89-91, 95-107, 118, 121-122, 125, 144-173, 175, 177, 179, 182, 195, 199, 200, 202, 206, 207, 211-214
Aristoxenus: 175
Arnzen, R.: 60, 64, 65-66, 71, 179
Ashworth, E.J.: 149, 151-152, 161, 163, 167, 171
Athanasius: 123
Augustinus, Aurelius : 89
Aulus Gellius: 193
Averroes : 34, 39, 40, 41, 43, 45, 46, 57, 59-76, 79, 81, 84, 86, 88-90, 93, 152, 170, 175, 177-187, 191, 212, 214
Avicenna: 33-58, 57, 89-90, 177, 180, 212
Bacchelli, F.: 124
Backus, I.D.: 200
Badawi, A. : 38, 39
Bakker, P.J.J.M.: 59, 78-79
Bangs, C.: 197
Bar Dayṣān (*Bardesanes*): 193
Barbaro, Ermolao: 122
Barnes, J.: 63, 145, 172
Bartholomew of Messina: 118
Bartocci, B.: *145-173*, 214
Bartolacci, A. : *33-58*, 64, 211
Bauloye, L. : 75
Bausi, F.: 124, 130
Beccarisi, A.: 111, 113
Beckmann, J.P.: 40
Bellucci, F.: 95
Bergeron, M.: 89
Bertelli, L.: 9, *11-21*, 211
Berti, E.: 11
Beullens, P. : 120, 122
Pelecani, Biagio: 87
Bergjan, S.P. : 199
Bianchi, L. : 10, 78
Biard, J.: *77-93*, 96, 167
Bīdārfar, M. : 56
Bien, G. : 12-13, 211
al-Biṭrūǧī, Nūr al-Dīn Abū Isḥāq (*Alpetragius*): 179, 185
Blair, A.: 117
Bloch, D.: 103-105, 213
Blom, H.W.: 193, 195, 199, 203
Bobzien; S.: 167, 201
Bodnár, I.: 50, 181,
Boethius, Severinus: 96, 112, 147-148, 152, 156, 158, 161, 169-171
Boethius of Dacia: 82, 163

Boissel, Radulphus: 163
Bonelli, M.: 146
Boner, P.J.: 189, 191
Borgnet, A. : 57, 151
Boros, G.: 193
Boulliau, Ismaël: 204
Bouyges, M.: 34, 61,
Bowen, A.C.: 40
Brahe, Tycho: 189-190
Brams, J. : 114
Branca, V.: 122
Brenet, J.-B.: 33, 59, 60, 79-80
Brett, A.S.: 206
Britannicus: 151-152
Brooke, C.: 195
Brown, V. : 120
Brumberg-Chaumont, J.: 151
Brungs, A.: 109
Bruns, I.: 24,
Brunschwig, J.: 145, 153
Bryson of Heraclea: 103
Burnett, C.: 56
Burnyeat, M.: 74
Butlker, S.: 124
Bywater, I.: 30, 31
Calabi, F. : 11
Calcidius: 193
Callippus of Cyzicus: 177
Calvin, John: 197-198, 208
Caminada, N. : 55
Campi, L.: 101
Cannone, D.: 101
Carmody, F.J. : 179
Carneades : 195, 206
Cassirer, E.: 174
Castelli, L.M. : 146, 157
Celluprica, V. : 40
Cerami, C. : 181
Cesarini Martinelli, L.: 124
Châtelain, E. : 151
Cherchi, P.: 119
Chesnut, G.F.: 203, 206
Chiaradonna, R. : 40
Chrysippus: 193, 201
Cicero: 146-147, 156-158, 169, 193, 195
Clement of Alexandria: 193
Clement of Rome: 193
Cohen, I. B.: 179
Collenuccio, Pandolfo: 124
Columbus, Michele: 119
Contarini, Gasparo: 184-187, 214
Copernicus, Nicolaus: 176, 178-179
Coroleu, A.: 202
Cortesi, M. : 121, 123, 125
Cramer, Daniel : 189
Cranz, F.E.: 120-121, 123, 125, 127, 149
Crawford, F.S.: 59
Crivelli, P. : 167
Cunaeus, Petrus: 200
Curnis, M. : 18, 20, 21,
D'Ancona, C. : 40, 106
d'Hoine, P.: 193
Dānišpazūh, M. T. : 46
David of Dinant : 57
De Bellis, E.: 149
De Leemans : 118, 122
De Libera, A. : 35, 78, 80
De Pace, A.: 178
De Rijk, L.M.: 147-148, 163, 201
de Rivo, Peter: 163
De Vogel, C.J.: 201
Del Forno, D.: 167
Del Lungo, I.: 123
Del Riccio Baldi, Pietro (*Crinitus*): 124-125
Del Soldato, E.: 155
Denifle, H.: 151
Dewenter, Th.: 86
Di Bono, M. : 179
Di Giovanni, M. : 33, 41, *59-76*,
Di Vincenzo, S. : 42
Dībağī, I. : 46
Diogenianus: 193
Donatus, Hieronymus: 89, 91-92
Donini, P.: 7, 9, 23-32, 201-202, 211
Dorotheus, Guillelmus: 149
Drossaart Lulofs, H.J.: 41
Druart, M.-Th. : 59
Dufour, R.: 89
Dufourny, M. : 11

Duke, A. : 197
Dunne, John: 119
Dunyā, S.: 43
Dutilh Novaes, C.: 161
Ebbesen, S.: 95-98, 100-102, 104, 146-148, 156, 158, 160, 170, 213
Eckhart, *Meister*: 112
Empedocles: 175
Endress, G. : 40, 41
Epictetus: 124, 193
Epicurus: 88, 175, 191, 193
Episcopius, Simon: 196
Eucken, R. : 13
Euclid: 37, 38
Eudoxus: 177
Eusebius of Cesarea: 194, 201-204, 206, 214
Eustratius of Nicaea: 95-96, 105
Evrart de Conty : 118
Fabbian, C. : 119
al-Fārābī, Abū Naṣr Muḥammad: 40, 41, 43, 52, 55, 56, 57, 61, 65
Fauser, W.: 57, 79
Fazzo, S.,: 33, 39, 42, 54, 76, 106
Federici Vescovini, G.: 87
Fera, V.: 124
Fiaschi, S.: 121, 123, 125
Fidora, A.: 96
Fiorentino, F.: 176
Ficino, Marsilius: 91, 93, 124-125
Flaminio, Marcantonio: 186
Flannery, K.L.: 146
Flashar, H.: 118
Flavius Josephus: 193
Fonseca, Petrus: 167
Fracastoro, Girolamo: 120, 177, 179, 185-188, 214
Frede, D.: 33, 201
Freudenthal, G.: 40
Freudenthal, J.: 75
Gabbay, D.M.: 152
Galen : 11, 25-26, 79, 123, 201, 211
Galilei, Galileo: 176
García Valverde, J.M. : 183
Gardenal, G.: 122
Garimberto, Girolamo: 119
Garin, E.: 122, 176
Gauthier, R.-A.: 101, 103
Gaza, Theodor: 118, 120-126, 129-132, 142, 213
Geddert, J.S.: 200
Genequand, C. : 35, 39, 40, 42, 48, 49, 51, 54, 55, 76, 173, 180
Gentile, S.: 124
Geoffroy, M.: 43, 181
George of Trebizond: 122, 125
Gerard of Cremona: 114, 213
Geyer, B.: 116
al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad (*Algazel*): 105, 180
Giacchini, Leonardo: 119
Giannantoni, G.: 201
Gielen, E.: 126
Ǧihāmī, Ǧ.: 62
Giles of Rome: 103-104, 152, 161, 167, 185
Gili, L.: 96
Gilson, E.: 152
Giovan Pietro d'Avenza: 123
Giovanni Maria da Rimini : 152
Glasner, R.: 60
Godfrey of Fontaines: 95
Goichon, A.-M.: 47
Gonzales Calderón, J.F.: 146, 148
Gotthelf, A.: 120, 122
Goulet, R.: 33
Goyens, M.: 118, 122
Grabmann, M.: 152
Grafton, A.: 117, 122, 202
Granada, M.A.: 177, 179, 189
Grant, E.: 177
Gratiadei, Giovanni of Ascoli: 149
Green-Petersen, N.J.: 82, 146, 148-149, 151-152, 156
Gregory of Rimini: 185
Grotius, Hugo: 193-209
Grotius, Wilhelm: 204
Guerrieri, E. : 122-123
Gutas, D.: 35, 39, 44, 45, 46, 56, 173

al-Ǧūzǧānī, Abū ʿUbayd ʿAbd al-Wāḥid ibn Muḥammad: 45
Hafner, R.: 193
Hager, F.P. : 201
Hahmann, A. : 201
Hamesse, J.: 155
Hartman, P.: 78
Hasnawi, A.: 40, 41
Hayduck, M.: 42, 70
Heering, J.P.: 200
Heinsius, Daniel: 200
Heraclides Ponticus: 175
Heret, M.: 118
Hesse, Benedictus: 86
Hicks, R.D. : 31
Hierocles: 193
Hippocrates: 118, 123
Hobbes, Thomas: 205
Hoenen, M.F.: 118
Hoffmann, R.: 71
Honnefelder, L.: 40
Horn, C. : 41, 76
Hossfeld, P.: 111, 113, 115
Hubien, H.: 82
al-Ḫuḍayrī, M.: 55
Hugh Eterianus: 96
Hugonnard-Roche, H. : 41
Hyman, A.: 179
Iacobus de Placentia: 149
Iamblichus: 193
Ibn Bāǧǧa, Abū Bakr Muḥammad (*Avempace*): 40
Ibn Ḥunayn, Abū Yaʿqūb Isḥāq: 40, 52
Ibn Rušd, Abū l-Walīd Muḥammad. *See* Averroes
Ibn Sīnā, Abū ʿAlī l-Ḥusayn. *See* Avicenna
Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbd Allāh : 40, 52
Ideler, J.L.: 117, 119, 124-125
Inowlocki, S.: 202
Iurlaro, F. : *193-209*
Jacobi, K.: 146
Jaeger, W. : 13, 14
James of Douai: 104
James of Venice: 95-96, 103-104, 147-148
Janos, D. : 40, 48, 50, 56, 177
Janssens, J. : 43
Jardine, L.: 149-150, 189
Jardine, N.: 189
John Buridan: 77-93, 167, 212
John Chrysostom: 199
John Dumbleton: 150
John Duns Scotus: 90, 92, 148, 185
John of Jandun: 80, 85-86
John of Salisbury: 104-105
Justin Martyr: 193
Kapetanaki, S. : 117
Kepler, Johannes: 176, 189-191
Kessler, E.: 89, 92, 149, 151, 193
Klima, G.: 78
Kouremenos, T., : 177
Kraye, J.: 149, 151
Kristeller, P.O.: 88-90, 120, 149, 175
Kruk, R. : 41, 69
Kuler, Matthias: 149
Lactantius (Firmianus): 195
Lando, Ortensio: 119
Landucci Ruffo, P.: 122
Laurent of Lindores : 77, 84-86.
Laurenti, R. : 11
al-Lawkarī, Abū l-ʿAbbās Faḍl ibn Muḥammad: 46, 47
Lee, M.: 167
Lefèvre d'Étaples, Jacques : 148, 150
Lemay, R.: 175
Leonicenus, Nicolaus: 122
Lesaffer, R. : 197
Levitin, D. : 193, 202
Liceti Fortunio: 155
Lisi, F.L. : 18
Lizzini, O. : 53
Lloyd, G.E.R. : 15
Locatellus, Bonetus : 121
Lohr, C.H. : 149
Long, A.A.: 201
Longo, A.: 167
Longomontanus, Christen Sørensen: 189
Lord, G. : 11

Lorenzo de' Medici: 123-124
Louis, P. : 121
Lubbert, Sibrand: 199
Lucretius: 175, 193
Lutz-Bachmann, M.: 96
Macrobius, Ambrosius Theodosius: 87
Madigan, A. : 70
Magnano, F.: 156
Mahoney, E.P.: 149-150
Maier, A. : 77
Maïer, I.: 125, 130
Maimonides, Moses: 40, 112, 193
Mainardi, Giovanni: 125
Malatesta, Novello: 149, 152
Malta, C.: 124-125
Mancha, J.L.: 179
Manfredi, Girolamo: 119
Mansfeld, J. : 201
Manutius, Aldus: 121, 124-125
Marcel, R. : 91
Mariani Zini, F.: 167
Marliani, Giovanni: 123
Marmo, C.: 95
Marmura, M.E. : 43, 44, 46, 53
Marsilius of Inghen: 85-86, 151
Martelli, M.: 124
Martin, A.: 76
Martini, C. : 40
Maximus Tyrius: 193
Mazarin, Jules Raymond (*Cardinal*): 193
Mazzocco, A.: 125
Meeusen, M. : 126-127
Melanchthon, Philip: 167
Mendelsohn, E.: 179
Mercuriale, Girolamo : 119-120
Michael of Ephesus: 147
Michael Scot: 179
Michalski, K.: 77
Michon, C.: 82
Militello, C.: 154
Miller, J.: 195
Minio-Paluello, L.: 95, 104, 147
Moggi, M.: 20
Mojsisch, B.: 88-89
Monfasani, J. : 121-122, 125
Moraux, P.: 25, 95, 100, 103, 106-107, 213
Morel, P.-M.: 33
Moss, A.: 196
Mousavi, R. : 173
Mudroch, V. : 109
Mugnai Carrara, D. : 125
Muhlegger, F. : 198
Mullā Ṣadrā: 40
Mūsā, M.Y.: 43
Musurus, Marcus : 148
Natali, C.: 175
Nellen, H.: 196-198, 200, 204
Newman, M.L. : 13
Nicolas Oresme: 77, 85, 87
Nifo, Agostino: 92, 145-173, 175-178, 214
Nocentini, L.: 198
Obbink, D.: 200
Oikonomopoulou, K.: 127
Olmos, P.: 122
Omodeo, P.D.: *173-192*, 214
Origenes: 193
Ott, L.: 152
Otte, J.K.: 113
Palazzo, A.: 111, 113
Palumbo, M. : 149
Pannonius, Janus : 91
Parentucelli, Tommaso (*pope Nicholas V*): 121, 131
Patar, B.: 85
Pelletier, J.: 86
Pelster, F.: 115
Pennuto, C. : 120
Perfetti, S.: 91
Perrone Compagni, V.: 174-175
Peter of Abano : 118
Peter of Ailly: 77, 84, 86
Peter of Spain: 156, 163
Philoponus (John): 30, 40, 96-102, 167
Piché, D. : 82
Pico, Giovanni della Mirandola: 124
Pico, Giovanni Francesco: 124-125
Pier Leone of Spoleto: 124
Pines, S.: 39, 173

Plato : 11, 18, 20, 37, 66, 176, 193, 211
Plotinus : 193
Pluta, O.: 77-78, 84-86
Plutarch : 123-124, 193, 201
Podolak, P.: 96
Poirel, D.: 10
Poliziano, Angelo : 120, 122-126, 128-129, 131-132, 213
Pomponazzi, Pietro: 59, 88-91, 173-176, 178, 181-184, 186, 191, 212, 214
Porphyry: 96, 111, 147
Porro, P.: 53
Poppi, A.: 90, 182
Posthumus Meyjes, G.H.M. : 197, 200
Proclus: 193
Protagoras : 66
Primavesi, O.: 41, 76
Ptolemy: 37, 38, 45, 87, 178
Queneau, G.: 116
Quintilian (Marcus Fabius): 146
Rabbie, E.: 197-198, 200, 204
Raben, Berchtold : 189
Rackham, H.: 207
Radice, R.: 195
Radulphus Brito : 79, 85, 104, 163
Rahman, F.: 55
Raimondi, F.P.: 177, 183
Ramminger, J.: 129
Ramón Guerrero , R. : 76
Ramusio, Giovan Battista : 186, 188
Randall, J.H. : 149
Rasarius, Johannes Baptista: 149
Raschieri, A.A. : 122
Raven, W.: 65
Rebonato, A.: 119
Regier, J: 191
Reginald of Piperno: 152
Reisman, D.C.: 42
Ricciardi, R.: 124
Richard Swineshead: 150
Robert Grosseteste: 97-98, 103, 106, 213
Robert Kilwardby (*Robertus de Cilnachobi*): 101, 151-152, 156-157, 167
Rodulphus Strodus: 150
Roger Bacon: 112
Ross, W.D.: 20, 30, 31
Rossi, P.B. : 97, 100-101, 117
Roques, M.: 86
Rowe, C.J. : 11,
Rubinelli, S.: 146
Rubino, E.: *109-116*
Rudolph, U.: 45
Ryle, G.: 77
Sabra, A.I. : 179
Saffrey, H.-D.: 115
Salles, R.: 202
Salmasius, Claudius: 196
Sarti, Alessandro: 124
Schierl, M.: 204
Schmitt, C.B.: 149, 151
Schmutte, J.: 25
Schnur, R.: 196
Schoonheim, P.L.: 113
Schrimpf, G.: 40
Schultess, P.: 109
Schüssler, R.: 164
Schütrumpf, E.: 15, 21
Sebti, M.: 43
Segonds, A.: 189
Seneca (Lucius Annaeus): 195, 208
Sepúlveda, Juan Ginés de: 202
Sergius of Reš^{c}aynā: 40, 41
Serra, G. : 40, 106
Sharples, R.W. : 50, 117, 174, 201-202
Silvano, L. : *117-144*, 213
Simon of Farvesham: 104, 163
Simplicius: 30, 43, 55, 193
Sinaceur, M.A. : 71
Siraisi, N. : 117, 122
al-Šīrāzī, ^{c}A. : 53
Skinner, Q. : 149, 151, 205
Slomkowski, P.: 158-160
Smet, A.J. : 114
Smets, A. : 118
Smith, J.E.H.: 191
Socrates: 37
Somos, M.: 193, 199
Sorabji, R.: 50, 96

Sotion of Alexandria: 146
Spranzi, M.: 149
Spruit, L.: 175
Stanglin, K.D.: 197
Steel, C.: 40, 151, 181
Stobaeus (Joannes): 195, 201
Strato of Lampsacus: 146
Straumann, B.: 195, 199
Street, T.: 55
Striker, G.: 167
Stroick, C.: 109, 115-116
Stump, E.: 156-157, 161
Stumpf, C.A.: 200
Sturlese, L.: 109, 112
Suárez, Francisco: 155
Susemihl, F.: 28
Sylburg, Friedrich: 120
Tacitus (Publius Cornelius): 193
Tassoni, Alessandro: 119
Tatian: 193
Taylor, R.C. : 56, 59
Tessicini, D.: 179, 189
Themistius: 30, 36, 37, 38, 41, 43, 44, 45, 47, 48, 49, 50, 56, 58, 97, 103, 111, 113, 147, 157-158, 170
Theiler, W.: 30, 31
Theophrastus: 27, 39, 121, 146-147, 157-159, 166, 169-171
Thom, P.: 167
Thomas Aquinas: 78-79, 89, 91, 101, 103, 111-112, 152, 155-156, 175, 185, 212
Thomas Wylton: 80
Todd, R.: 201
Tolsma, M.: 197
Tripodi, V.: 10
Tuck, R.: 195, 206
Twersky, I.: 40
Twetten, D.: 33, 50
Überweg, F.: 109
Vaglienti, F.M.: 123
Valla, Giorgio: 120, 122-124, 126-132, 143, 213
Valverde, M.G.: 176
van Beverwijck, Johan: 196, 203
van Gelderen, M.: 205
van Ittersum, M.: 195, 205
van Leeuwen, Th. M.: 197
van Nifterik, G.: 207
van Oldenbarnevelt, Johan: 197
Van Ophuijsen, J.M.: 146
van Reigensbergen, Maria: 193
Van Riel, G.: 193
Van Riet, S.: 53, 55,
Vanhamel, W.: 114
Vansteenkiste, C.: 111
Vaschieri, Girolamo: 119
Vecce, C. : 120
Ventura, I.: 118
Verbeke, G.: 53
Viano, C. A. : 11
Viger, F. : 202
Violante, M.L. : 12
Vossius, Gerard: 196
Vuillemin-Diem, G.: 114
Walaeus, Antonius: 197
Wallace, W.A.: 151
Wallies, M.: 95, 98, 146
Walter Burley: 149
Walzer, R.: 56
Wechel, André: 120
Weisheipl, J.A.: 115
Weijers, O.: 151-152
Wielang, G. : 40
Wildberg, C.: 40
William of Moerbecke: 114-116, 213
Williams, M.: 202
Winkel, L.C.: 193, 195, 203
Wisnovsky, R.: 42, 45,
Woods, J.: 152
Wtenbogaert, Johannes: 197
Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī: 40
Zalta, E.N.: 33
Zamagni, C.: 202
Zambertus, Bartholomeus: 149
Zanotti Carney, E.: 119
Zāyid, S.: 43
Zeller, E. : 25
Zimara, Marco Antonio: 119
Zonta, M.: 39, 54, 60, 64, 76
Zupko, J.: 77-78, 87

Index of Subjects

Astronomy: 45
Biology: 13, 14, 70, 183
City: 14-17
Constitution: 12, 17, 19, 208
Demonstration: 52, 92, 101-107, 165-169
Dialectics: 20, 47, 145-172
Elements: 39
Faith: 83, 87
Form(s): 13, 19, 62, 64, 66, 80, 83, 87, 91, 153, 186
Freedom: 17, 19, 54, 155, 201-209
Good: 43, 207 ff.
Heaven: 112, 173-191
Language: 13, 45, 46, 47, 59, 69, 154 ff.
Liber de causis: 35, 57
Logos (*see* Language)
Matter: 44, 79, 182 ff.
Metaphysics: 42 ff., 60 ff., 71-75, 189
Movement/ Mover: 39, 40, 43, 44, 48, 52, 109 ff., 173-191
Noetics: 23-32, 47, 49, 89, 92, 183 ff.
Politics: 11-21, 197 ff.
Principle (cause): 38, 44, 61, 63, 69, 88, 163 ff., 180, 190
Prudence: 17
Reason: 12 ff., 83
Self-conscience: 29
Sense(s): 81, 101
Soul: 55, 59, 78 ff., 88, 175 ff.
Topics: 17, 145-173
Virtue: 17, 18